

"Brave New World"

A COMEDY

by

A. L. Matthison

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Birmingham

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ROI

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

TO THE
MERCHANT SEAMEN
OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND HER ALLIES

THIS PLAY IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED TO THE
MEN WHO NEVER WENT ON STRIKE AND GAVE
UP THEIR LIVES THAT WE MIGHT BE FED
AND SAVED FROM STARVATION AND POSSIBLE
SURRENDER.

ANY PROFIT FROM THE SALE OF THIS PLAY WILL
BE GIVEN TO THE MERCHANT SEAMEN'S COMFORTS
FUND.

This Play was written during January and February, 1944.,
and printed in September of the same year.

“ O, wonder !
*How many goodly creatures are there here !
How beauteous mankind is ! O, brave new world
That has such people in't*”
(MIRANDA—“ The Tempest ”)

Would anyone receiving a presentation
copy of this book be good enough to
send its price to the Merchant Navy
Comforts Fund, 62 Heath Street,
London, N.W.3 ?

“BRAVE NEW WORLD”

A Comedy in Three Acts

By

A. LL. MATTHISON

The action takes place in the State of Arianaria in the year 1980.

The scene is the combined lounge and reception room of the Controller of District 04267, in the Sovereign State of Arianaria, Western Section.

CHARACTERS

JOSEPH PROSPER

Controller of District 04267 Western Section, Arianaria

ELEANOR PROSPER..... *His Second Wife*

CARL SNOOPER..... *Inspector-General, Western Section*

WINSTONE SMART *Deputy Assistant to Prosper*

MRS. PHŒBE LANGDALE *Prosper's Widowed Sister*

STEFAN *Prosper's Secretary*

MASHA *Maid to Eleanor*

JOE STEPHENS..... *An ex-General of 1940*

TRUPENNY *A Gardener*

PONSONBY *A Butler*

There is also a Broadcast Announcer and voices from the Studio.

Entr'act music (gramophone records) should be Elgar's "Land of Hope and Glory," Parry's "Jerusalem" and "Lords of the Air," preferably choral.

(Application for permission to perform this play should be addressed to the author. All royalties received by the author will be given to Merchant Seamen's Comforts Fund.)

NOTES ON AGES AND MAKE-UP

PROSPER.—A man of 75, benign, persuasive, dignified, dark grey hair and a neat dark grey beard, young-looking for his years (about 60).

ELEANOR, his second wife, is about 35, pretty, very smartly dressed, lively, pleasure-loving, but no mere doll.

THEODORE SNOOPER.—30, a keen military type, fanatical, a zealous officer of the State. Clean shaven with closely cropped hair. Storm trooper type.

WINSTONE SMART.—30, well-groomed, capable, ambitious, vain, intolerant and flirtatious.

MRS. LANGDALE (PHŒBE).—An aristocratic, calm, dignified lady of 70 with keen powers of observation and a ready tongue. Has preserved her figure and personal charm; looks younger than her years.

STEFAN.—A breezy young fellow of 20.

MASHA.—A lively young thing of 17.

JOE STEPHENS.—A hale old gentleman of about 80. (An ex-General of 1940.)

TRUPENNY.—A well set up young man of 25.

BUTLER.—Kensitas type—age 70.

TELEVISION SCREEN

In back wall, a television screen should be placed. When broadcasts take place, the figure of the announcer should be seen from the waist upwards. The screen is opaque until the warning sounds, when it becomes transparent and the figures become visible.

By 1980, three dimensional coloured projections will have become the general practice, so no obscuring gauze need be used as a frame to the screen, only a neutral grey background. This device will heighten the effect of many of the broadcasts, as facial expression can be used and arm movements indulged in to emphasize the matter broadcast. A strong lime should be thrown on the screen when in operation. The broadcasters cannot, of course, see or hear their listening audience and should act and speak as they would in a transmission studio of to-day.

It might also be advantageous to darken the stage during broadcasts, which would relieve those on the stage from standing at the Salute, except at the beginning and end of the broadcast.

MEN'S DRESS

Men's fashions have changed very little in the last forty years; it is not very likely that they will have changed any more during the next forty years. There will, however, probably be more colour in men's attire. In this view, then, it is suggested that the male characters' dress should remain in shape very like to-day's, although one-piece suits might be adopted. The colouring should be as under.

FIRST AND THIRD ACTS

PROSPER.—*Plum coloured coat and vest and russet brown trousers.*

SMART.—*Bottle green coat and vest—fawn trousers.*

JOE STEPHENS.—*Fawn coat, dark blue vest and trousers.*

SNOOPER.—*Black military type dress.*

PONSONBY.—*Black coat and trousers—dark blue vest.*

TRUPENNY.—*Mid-green one-piece suit with green baize apron—short sleeves to jacket part.*

STEFAN } *Russian peasant costume.*
MASHA }

SECOND ACT

EVENING DRESS :

PROSPER.—*A blue coat with tails, blue trousers and white vest. Soft white shirt with flowing white tie—Paris student type.*

SMART.—*Dinner jacket and trousers in grey, white vest and white flowing tie.*

STEFAN.—*Dinner jacket, vest and trousers mauve, flowing white tie.*

STEPHENS.—*Cardinal colour coat and trousers—white tie and vest.*

All collars to be turned down type.

Other male characters as First Act.

LADIES' DRESS

It would be a rash and foolish prophet who would attempt to say what ladies will be wearing in 1980. Just as within historical records women have always looked charming, whatever the fashion, so I anticipate they will look in 1980. No matter how extravagant or absurd their costumes have been, from the crinolines and bustle period through Gibson girl style, leg of mutton sleeves, cartwheel hats, on to the knee length skirts and cockly bits of confection on their heads, women have always appealed to men. Obviously, it isn't the dress but what is inside it that matters. Therefore, the ladies in this play will not be dictated to by the author, but he suggests rich colours and for the evening dresses in Second Act, a style similar to those worn in the Napoleonic period, high waists, short sleeves and ankle length skirts.

ELEANOR wears pale blue flying kit in First Act.

SECURITY POLICE.—*Dark brown flying kit.*

SCENE SETTING AND PROPERTIES

The decoration suggests strong Russian influence. A large table desk with card index, case, etc. Smaller writing table with standard lamp near couch, chairs, bookcases, etc. Centre of back wall hangs a banner from a projecting pole. This banner does not consist of a flag, but an enormous shirt, which hangs by its shoulders and sways forward from the wall. The shirt should be at least ten or twelve feet long and its breadth in proportion. It is a shirt of all the primary colours, also black and white arranged symmetrically in a chess-board pattern. It should be possible to spot-light it from a switch off stage and cause it to wave simultaneously by a blower.

There are large paintings round the walls of Stalin, Churchill, Roosevelt, Chiang-Kai-Shek.

On each side of the flag, let into the wall, are loud speaker grids. The doors into the room should be three, back R. and mid-L. and R. The back entrance, french window leading to garden.

The desk down L., writing table up R., settee down R., and other chairs, etc., as convenient.

The loud speaker commences any broadcast with a loud and prolonged whirr, then a slight pause followed by three loud clangs on a bell. Simultaneously the grids are illuminated by red light inside.

Whenever the loud speaker begins to operate, everyone springs to attention and so remains until the broadcast is over. On coming to attention, the characters will also give the New World Salute, which must be held to end of broadcast.

THE SALUTE consists of the clenched fist of the Communist and the outstretched hand of the Nazi or Fascist cult and both hands must come into action simultaneously. Naturally, some of the characters are more perfunctory than others in discharging these duties, whilst one or two are notably correct and zealous in their actions.

The ALL-CLEAR of the broadcast is given by one loud bell clang, when the listeners are free to relax and resume their usual avocations.

ACT I

The stage is empty when curtain is raised. This gives the audience opportunity to study the décor, the pictures and the Shirt. After a suitable pause, STEFAN enters and empties despatch box on desk. He arranges papers, letters, etc., and then flutters about the room humming to himself. Having finished his arranging, he pauses down L. and scrutinises the pictures. Looking carefully to see if the doors are all closed, he deliberately stands in front of each picture, beginning down R., and cocks a snook at each of them.

Having shown his contempt for the illustrious dead he goes up stage and stands in front of the Shirt. Here he excels in his rudeness, parodies the Salute, cocks double snooks and makes rude noises.

DURING THIS LAST EXHIBITION MASHA HAS ENTERED SILENTLY down R. and stands gazing at him. As he half turns she speaks :

MASHA : What the ruddy heck are you supposed to be doing ? Showing grave disrespect for the Flag, behaving subversively to the State. I've a good mind to report you to the Culture Centre.

STEFAN : And if you do I'll report you for swearing. You know cussing is prohibited, don't you ? You are much too fond of strong language. The State Professor of Basic English says swearing is subversive and it is forbidden.

MASHA : Forbidden, my foot ! So are a lot more things, but it's nice to do them sometimes. But why were you doing what you were doing when I came in ? Making those funny noises and blowing your nose on your fingers ?

STEFAN : O, because I'm fed up and to-day is Flag Day, the Anniversary of the establishing of that (*with a contemptuous gesture towards the flag*) and the old man has to make his Annual Broadcast to the schools. I've only had to listen to it about fifteen years, ten at school and five here, and it's always the same old blether. The old man started to give it years before I was born. All about that silly old Shirt and those old chaps up there. Gosh, why have their pictures hung up, they've all been dead for years.

They mean nothing to the young. Old Prosper simply loves them. I've seen him gazing at them with tears in his eyes, actually tears. Well, if he wasn't my boss I'd—

MASHA : Here, stop that ! No man is good enough to be another man's master. That's what we were taught every day in school. There are no bosses to-day, not like in the old bad times when they had foremen and shop stewards in every factory, the brutes !

STEFAN : No bosses, eh ? You wait till Inspector Snooper comes nosing round, you'll learn all about bossing. If it comes to that, no woman is good enough to be another woman's mistress, so what about you with your " Yes madam, no madam " every day ?

MASHA : Well, that's different. Mrs. Prosper is a real lady and treats me as an equal.

STEFAN : Well, never mind ; masters and mistresses don't amount to much. I've never had a mistress and you won't have a master—until you're married.

MASHA : Probably not even then, my lad. But don't you be so disrespectful to those (*indicating pictures*) in future. They were real masters and bosses. Mr. Prosper, sorry, Brother Prosper, has a great regard for them.

STEFAN : What did they do except fight their rotten old wars ? Wars of conquest and death to the invader.

MASHA : Yes, they fought wars so that the world might be born again and a new order created with no more wars. You must admit there are no wars to-day, at least no big ones.

STEFAN : And what have we got out of it, I ask you ? All that fighting—for what ?

MASHA : I'm ashamed of you, brother. We are living in 1980, not in 1930, in the dark ages of Capitalism and Private Enterprise, when the workers were starved to death by the thousand and flogged by their cruel masters for coming late to work in the early morning. This is Arianaria, not England. We are free now, not slaves to the master class. Have you forgotten

all we were taught at school? Did the old world only work four hours a day with Saturdays and Sundays free? Did they have old age pensions at forty? Did they have free education, free medical service, free cinemas and—and—

STEFAN : And free-fights. There was a pretty gory one at the soccer match last Saturday, because the referee gave a foul to Section 04266 against us. But even if those old fossils, who are all dead, smashed up the Huns and Japs in their day, we don't want to be always reminded of it by having their silly faces staring at us. This is the day of the young. *We* are young and in love with each other.

MASHA : Speak for yourself, brother. You always were very sentimental; *now* you are in love.

STEFAN : Yes, I am, and you know who with. You are the only girl in the world for me, Masha.

MASHA : Don't be too sure that you are the only boy. There are lots of boys to choose from.

STEFAN : Now look here, Mavis—

MASHA : My name is Masha, and don't you forget it.

STEFAN : You were christened Mavis, and remained Mavis until old Prosper started all this silly Russian business. Fancy me, his trained secretary, having to dress up like a blinking Moujik, calling me Stefan and you Masha. We don't even know a word of Russian. But you're trying to change the subject. Now look here, Mavis my girl, you know I love you and I'm not going to stand Mr. Smarty Smart pawing you about. Let him keep to Mrs. Prosper and leave you to me, or there'll be trouble.

MASHA : You leave the Mistress alone *and* old Prosper as you call him. They are real comrades and always treat us properly.

STEFAN : So he is old. We are young. We don't get our own way as we should.

[*Enter SMART.*]

We are young I say and the New Order was made for the young, not the old dug-outs.

SMART (*coming down stage*) : So, Brother Stefan, the old ought to be liquidated, eh?

STEFAN (*confused*) : Well,—er, not exactly that, but some of them hang on too long.

SMART (*to MASHA*) : We needn't detain you from your duties, sister. I have important business with Brother Stefan, and you no doubt have your household duties to attend to. More important than flirting with Stefan.

[MASHA *flounces out.*]

Well, brother. Old age has its privileges, in the service of the State, you should know. *We* shan't be young always.

STEFAN : But anyone not in the service of the State is compulsorily retired at forty. State officials live for ever. What chance does that give the young?

SMART : True, but there may be changes and then there should be promotion for smart young fellows like you and me. Personally, I think that even a State official should be pensioned off at sixty.

STEFAN : They weren't in the days of those (*indicating pictures on the wall*). We were told at school that Churchill was close on seventy and he was at the head of the State forty years ago. The others were no chickens either, Stalin and Roosevelt. Prosper says they stuck to their jobs no matter what happened.

SMART : Yes, that's true, but that was in the bad old days when the young were kept down by the old and not allowed any freedom. They didn't give them a vote until they were twenty-one ; now everyone has one vote at sixteen and members of the Party have three. But this is 1980, the thirtieth year of the New Order. (*Salutes.*) Our brother Prosper must be well over seventy, and between you and me, he's getting rather dodderly. You are his secretary and must have noticed it. He moons about too much and is always admiring those pictures.

STEFAN : Well, I must say he's pretty down on me if I make a slip. Only the other day—

[*Loud Speaker Alarm.*]

BROADCASTER : This is the State Broadcasting Bureau and this is Announcer 205678 speaking. The milk ration will be discontinued for all over seventy. It will be increased for children up to sixteen. A limited compassionate allowance of milk may be granted if the applicant is able to satisfy the State Medical Board that they are suffering simultaneously and at one and the same time from double pneumonia, congestion of the liver, cystitis, shingles and water-brash.

[END OF BROADCAST.]

[STEFAN and SMART have stood at attention and the Salute during Broadcast.]

STEFAN : Well, that ought to polish some of them off, brother. It's quite right though. The rising generation is most important.

SMART : H'm, rather severe, but the young must be looked after. The future depends on them—(*Pause*). I suppose Brother Prosper has gone to the Broadcasting Studio to give the Annual Address to the schools. The Anniversary of the founding of that (*points to flag*).

STEFAN : Yes, same old sermon ; I'm fed up with it. How the old boy enjoys it.

SMART : You're not the only one, but see that you are present to listen in. It will be on very soon. In the bad old days people could be put to death for listening to foreign broadcasts. To-day we are not so drastic. We only punish people who fail to listen to the *State* broadcasts, if they are found out. For the first offence a fine of two shillings and sixpence is imposed. Further offences may lead to imprisonment. So mind you listen, Brother Stefan, even if you've heard it before several times.

[*Enter at back, ELEANOR. She is laden with milliner's boxes and parcels. She wears a pale blue flying kit.*]

ELEANOR : Such a scramble. Not an inch of space on the roof at the Louvre, it was absolutely crammed. I had to park the old auto-jet on the top of the Eiffel Tower and it's a nasty place to take off from. I nearly crashed. My word, my heart missed a beat or two.

SMART : You ought not to take such risks, sister. (*Helps with parcels—STEFAN also assists.*) You are too precious.

ELEANOR : Masha, Masha, where are you ?

[MASHA comes running in.]

Here Masha, clear this junk into my room. You help her, brother Stefan. Look sharp about it.

MASHA and STEFAN : Certainly, Madam, with pleasure.

[MASHA and STEFAN do so and exit.]

ELEANOR : That's my last flying trip this month. I've used up all my aviation coupons. I think we ought to be allowed more than 200 gallons a month. My auto-jet only does three miles to the gallon. They say a new model is coming out which will do ten to the gallon.

SMART : I think I could get you a few more. I'm allowed as much as I requisition for my official journeys. Besides the Petrol Controller is a great friend of mine.

ELEANOR : But non-officials are strictly limited.

SMART : Yes, I know, but it's possible for a State official to wangle a drop or two for his friends. That's one advantage of being an official.

ELEANOR : But isn't that against the law ?

SMART : All's fair in love and war, and I want you to spend a holiday in Paris with *me*.

ELEANOR : I'm afraid not. There are limits to my folly and I intend to draw the line. I told you I nearly crashed the old bus coming back, and it's made me think. The skies are overcrowded to-day, and there are rotten pilots about. No more Paris for me.

SMART : But I don't understand, dearest. You promised to wait in Paris for me to-day. I was astounded to see you come back.

ELEANOR : Yes, I know, but I changed my mind, a woman's privilege—if she happens to have any sort of a mind to change. Do you object ? Or perhaps you don't agree that I have a mind.

SMART : We've been through all that before. It isn't the first time you've changed your mind. Why don't you make it up for once? This is no sort of a life for you, married to a man old enough to be your grandfather.

ELEANOR : Don't exaggerate. He is seventy-five and I am thirty-five, nearly, and he's very young for his years. Grandfather indeed!

SMART : That still makes it possible, dearest. But all the same he is too old. You ought to be a happy young mother rearing brave children for the State.

ELEANOR : Rearing children for the State. (*With scorn.*) That's what my grandmother did. Nine children, six of them boys and all killed in the war against the barbarians. No thank you. In the New Order a woman has so many activities, so many interests, she's not going to spend her life breeding children. That's why the birth-rate is going down, in spite of all the State can do to persuade women that the State is more important than the individual. I may be old-fashioned, but I don't agree.

SMART : Don't let's talk about State policy. After all I'm a man and you're a woman, the woman I love. That's all that matters. I've urged you to leave Prosper, but you have those silly old scruples of duty which the old world made such a fuss about. Duty to home, husband, position. As if there is any duty except to oneself—and of course the State. We are young, this is the day of youth. We owe something to ourselves.

ELEANOR : And the State.

SMART : Oh, hang the State—I mean let's make the most of our youth, Come, darling. [*Goes to her and puts his arm round her. He is just about to kiss her when the loud speaker sounds its alarm.*]

BROADCAST : "This is the State Broadcasting Bureau and this is Announcer 205,678 speaking. The new State auto-jet flier will be on sale next Monday at a control price of £37 15s. 10½d. for single seaters and £92 10s. 6d. for family models. No coupons necessary. The Board desire to point out that applicants must be over 14 years of age and must have qualified as pilots at the State Flying School.

"The Statistical Bureau, in its Annual Report, announces that the death rate in Western Arianaria is lower than it has been for years. The birth-rate is still decreasing. Infantile mortality is much less, however, and the population, therefore, still shows an increase in spite of fewer births. The recent census shows that the State is paying old age pensions to several thousand old people who have passed the age of 100. The State doctors who have examined many of these centenarians report that they are all in good health and likely to live for years. As this could not have been foreseen when State pensions were established at 40 years of age, the Grand Council are seriously considering the problem."

[END OF BROADCAST.]

[Directly the Loud Speaker Alarm is sounded, STEFAN, MASHA and the GARDENER rush in, stand to attention and salute until end of Broadcast—and then exeunt.]

SMART (*goes to ELEANOR and embraces her ; as MRS LANGDALE enters hurriedly they break away R.*) : Damn !

MRS. LANGDALE : Is the broadcast over ?

[SMART and ELEANOR are confused.]

H'm, I missed more than the State oracles' utterances, it seems. I suppose that was a sisterly and brotherly embrace, or was it ? I thought such things never happened in this era of up-lift and dedication of self to the State. When I was a young woman—

ELEANOR : You never indulged in a mild flirtation I suppose, or did you ?

MRS. L. : Many times, sister, in my exotic past, and it wasn't necessarily brotherly and sisterly either. However, it's none of my business. If Brother Prosper doesn't object, why should I ? I thought that was going to be the anniversary talk to the schools. It ought to be on any moment now. My dear Brother Prosper does love to talk to the little dears. I suppose it's second nature to him. He was a Welfare Superintendent in his young days, and after the war served on the New Order Convention and World Planning Committee. He is bringing the Inspector-General back to dinner. We'll have a little flutter at Contract after, while the Inspector goes through his report. You two,

Prosper and me. The Inspector couldn't tell a card from a hand-saw. They don't teach Bridge in the State Schools, it isn't uplifting enough for them. (*Sits at small table with her knitting.*) Don't let me interfere with your plans my dears. I expect Eleanor wants to get to her house duties, and you, Brother Smart, have to go through the Controller's correspondence with that scatterbrain, young Stefan. Where is he? Please ring for him.

[*Enter STEFAN.*]

Good morning, Brother Stefan.

STEFAN: Good morning, Sister Phœbe.

MRS. L.: Have you got everything ready for your master? He is coming back immediately after his broadcast. You had both better get a move on. (*STEFAN and SMART go to desk and get busy with papers.*) The Inspector will be with him.

[*Re-enter ELEANOR, who sits by MRS. L. ELEANOR has some embroidery to work on.*]

Did you have a nice time in Paris, dear? You didn't stay long. I'm not surprised, Paris isn't what it was in my youth. Dear old Paris, before the beastly Huns fouled it, I loved it. To sit on the Boulevard des Italiens on a bright summer evening, sipping Dubonnet and watching the crowds of people passing to and fro, was very sweet in those far-off days. Well, it's no use thinking about it now. How did you get on there this morning, Eleanor?

ELEANOR: So, so. All the shops were crowded. There was a queue half a mile long, I should think, at the Louvre. It was Bargain Day. I hadn't time to join the free for all fight. One woman told me she had been there since day-break. She said they had advertised fully-fashioned silk stockings without coupons for the first time for three years. Of course, there's been plenty to be had on the Black Market.

MRS. L.: Paris isn't the only place where there's a Black Market. You know those heliotrope silk undies I bought last week, well (*whispers*).

ELEANOR: You were a pig not to let me in on it.

MRS. L.: You, the wife of the local Controller! Suppose you had been caught. Why, both of you might have been liquidated.

ELEANOR : What about you ?

MRS. L. : Oh, Mother Nature will attend to me in due course, I've no doubt. Talking of liquidation, my dear, reminds me of the lovely iced Bock we used to drink in Paris during the interval at the Folies Bergère or the Moulin Rouge. But when we went to the Red Mill, I always had to keep my old man on a short lead. He was a bit of a dog, you know, dear, and there were so many bitches about in those places.

[*They talk together.*]

STEFAN (*at desk*) : He's getting awfully slack. Look here, there's only about three reports filled in out of forty. No rations report, no review of old age pensioners' religious beliefs, no details about the murder of the Commissioner of Income Tax for this district, no comments on the Standardisation of Public Opinion which the State is very keen on.

SMART : Extremely lax. We must draw Brother Snooper's attention to this grave dereliction of duty. It's absolutely indefensible for a State official to get so slack. One would think he was losing all respect for the State in his old age.

STEFAN : A working man is too old at 40 ; a director of a private company has to retire by order of the State at 35, but a public official is like the brook, he can go on for ever.

SMART : Private company, eh ? Perhaps you don't know that the last private company was abolished two years ago and its directors liquidated. They had been warned many times but, pig-headed old men of 70, they would go on manufacturing children's scooters in spite of all the State Factory Inspector's advice. They stuck out to the end defying the State, saying they were the only firm making scooters. Such old-fashioned ideas, as if modern children hadn't something better to do than indulge in such individualistic pastimes.

STEFAN : No, in this out of the way rural section, we don't hear all the latest news. Father sent me a scooter to the State Seminary but the Superintendent said that it was anti-social and took it away.

SMART : Look here. Here's a communication from the Superintendent of the State Study Circle asking for a return of

all people over 30 who are attending evening classes in Astronomy. No reply has apparently been sent.

STEFAN : Er, brother, I'm afraid that's my fault. Prosper did dictate a reply, see, there are my shorthand notes on the back.

SMART : And what was his reply ? Please read it.

STEFAN : He says, " All the people over 30 in my Section have something better to do with their evenings than star gazing. They prefer the Cinemas or the Dance Halls, now the pubs have been suppressed."

SMART : I'll keep that memo. You can swear to his dictating the reply. So you see, still hankering after pubs, those terrible places where Prosper and his generation spent their evenings playing darts, crown and anchor and bumble puppy and never thinking of the State. (*Salutes.*)

LOUD SPEAKER ALERT.

[*Everyone comes rushing in, salutes and stands to attention as usual.*]

LOUD SPEAKER : " This is the State Broadcasting Bureau of Arianaria, Western Section, and this is Announcer 06,237 speaking. *Home News.* The monthly ration of coal for the next month will be four cwt. in the South and five cwt. in the North (*short pause*). I beg your pardon, I will read that again. The monthly ration of butter—butter, will be four pounds a month in the South and five pounds in the North. All other foodstuffs will remain as at present, namely 25 per cent. less for people living in the South than for those living in the North. The ration is per house, without regard to number of inmates.

Shell Eggs. The ration will be increased to one and a quarter eggs in the South and one and a half in the North. The quarter and half shell egg respectively will be issued in powder form.

The six men in the Sub-Section 05,678 Western District who satisfied the State Tribunal that they have a conscientious objection to work have been liquidated.

The strike of coal miners to secure better pay for merchant seamen has been settled by compromise. The miners have agreed to accept a reduction in wages of ten shillings a week, which is to be added to the seamen's wages. By this public-spirited action,

the merchant seamen will now receive half the wages paid to miners. They will, of course, continue to work much longer hours than the miners, but they are used to that and never grumble. *Sport.* The inter-section Tiddley Winks Contest has been won by Brother Binkleton with three tiddleys and one wink in hand.

We are now taking you over to the State Stadium for a running commentary on the inter-section Hop-Scotch final. It will be given by Brother Fusspot of the Strength through Joy Bureau.

This is Fusspot speaking from the State Stadium. The competitors for the inter-section Hop-Scotch finals are lining up. You have a map of the course in your *Radio Times*, please get it ready. There is a tremendous crowd here. Tod Slogger, last year's winner, has just arrived at No. 1 court, square one. The betting is 10 to 4 on Tod, sorry, that was a technical hitch, betting, of course, is prohibited. The other competitors are lining up. Everyone is keyed up with tense excitement. The judges and referees take their stand. We are all breathlessly waiting for the whistle to blow (*whistle heard*). There it goes, they're off. Square one. Tod is hopping magnificently, grand action. Sam Snapper is on next court doing quite well. Tod is nearing square two. I'll give you his time—up—down—up—down—up—down. Oh, hard luck, he's missed the scotch, no, no, he's on it and hopping furiously. The others are nowhere. Now the whistle's gone, off side for the Ramblers. Square three, Tod is leading by three hops. The Chickens are coming up, they're coming up, oh, Boy! they're leading. Square four. Tod is hopping faster than ever. I'll give you his time again—up—down—up—down—up—down. Square five. Square five Ramblers are drawing level, they're drawing level, Great Stalin, they're level. The Chickens are hard pressed. Betting is now—sorry, my mistake. Square six. Tod is hopping magnificently, Sam Snapper following him up closely, Square seven, boy, they're level. Tod is a trifle the faster I think. I'll give you his time again (*very rapidly*). Up—down—up—down—up—down. Square eight. Tod is over the line, he's over, he'll do it, no, yes, no, yes—he's won, he's won. I'll now return you to the Studio.

STUDIO ANNOUNCER: The Hop-Scotch Final of the Inter-Section has been won by Tod Slogger of the Chickens, with three hops and one scotch over Sam Snapper of the Ramblers.

The Salvage Controller again asks us to warn the public against the danger of lighting fires in parks and woods. Much damage has been done to crops this summer. Twenty-seven tons of litter, old bottles, cardboard picnic boxes and empty tin cans have been collected by the Salvage Department after the last State holiday in the Western Section alone.

[END OF BROADCAST.]

MRS. L. : The State schools don't seem to be doing much to educate the rising generation, although they start on them at five years of age. Consideration for others and other people's property is evidently not taught nowadays.

SMART : I don't agree, sister. Consideration for the State is a child's first duty. Other things come later and property, unless it is *State* property, is not of much importance.

MRS. L. : You have a tidy bit of property at the end of this road, brother. A nice little villa, very well furnished, pretty garden which is kept up for you. How should you like to see young hooligans tearing it up?

SMART : That's quite different, sister. I'm a State official, the same as your brother Prosper. We belong to the State, we are part of the State, and of course must be protected.

MRS. L. (*with a snort of disgust*) : I don't see the necessity. I don't hold with these class distinctions. There's far too many of them nowadays. When I was a girl, Jack was as good as his master. To-day the State official is everything and poor Jack nothing.

SMART : In theory, you are no doubt right. In our new order, one man is as good as another. But have you ever asked what "as good as" implies? As good a Party man, as good an organiser, as good a scientist, as good a manager, as good a mathematician? No, there will be always differences between men as regards brains and capabilities. Theoretically Jack is as good as his master, but in practice the master rises to the ruling class and Jack wisely keeps in his place and does not meddle with things too high for his simple intelligence. That is a law of nature, sister.

ELEANOR : That's a very comfortable doctrine for members of the ruling class in the State. You have a good opinion of yourself, Brother Smart. You know your own worth evidently.

SMART : A man should know his own worth, sister.

MRS. L. : Even if no one else does.

SMART : I resent that insinuation, sister. As a State official of course, I know my value.

ELEANOR : Oh, stop this bickering, you two ! It gets on my nerves. Brother Smart is much too touchy, and you, Phœbe, are always snapping at him.

MRS. L. : I didn't start it and there's another thing. I refuse to stand at attention all through the Anniversary Broadcast. My rheumatism won't let me stand with my arms stuck up like Moses, and there's no presentable Aaron here to hold them up.

ELEANOR : I'm with you there, Phœbe. I've always resented it. As if we couldn't listen just as well sitting down comfortably. There are far too many of these regulations to-day. You mustn't smoke, because the Radio Doctor says no clean-minded man or woman smokes tobacco. Well, I'm going to have a cigarette and if my mind isn't clean enough for the State they can send their Sanitary Squad to clean it up. And what's more I shall loll back in my chair and smoke all through Prosper's talk. I know he wouldn't object. (*Lights cigarette and gives one to Mrs. L.*)

SMART : But, Sister Eleanor, that is treason to the State. You know as well as I do that the State insists that listeners should stand at the salute for all State broadcasts. Not to do so is to show disrespect, and actually it is a punishable offence. There has been great laxity in this district for some time and the Grand Council is seriously concerned about it. It's all due to Brother Prosper's slackness and disregard for discipline. Besides, he shouldn't encourage you to smoke. Young women don't smoke to-day.

ELEANOR : Please leave my husband out of it. At any rate I sit through the broadcast. Prosper won't report me to the Gestapo, although I daresay you might, you are so keen on serving the State.

SMART : I am sorry you think that of me, that I should inform about you !

ELEANOR : But it's your duty to report me to the Clean Living and Plain Thinking Bureau, isn't it? How is the world to be improved if we don't report each other's faults to the proper authority? Of course, I know there's no Gestapo nowadays, but there are plenty of nosey people always ready to do the dirty work. I'm glad Prosper discourages such underhanded methods. Half the trouble in the world is caused by well-intentioned people trying to order other people's lives, instead of attending to their own. You are rather inclined that way, Brother Smart.

[SMART is confused and is about to reply when the Broadcast Alert sounds.]

[BROADCAST ALARM.]

ANNOUNCER : This is the State Broadcasting Bureau, Western Section, and this is Announcer 04,261 speaking. *Home News.* Owing to the necessity for conserving fats for foodstuffs, the manufacture of lipstick is now prohibited. A thousand lip-sticks are equivalent to half a pound of margarine. The mother who uses lip-stick robs her children's bread of its butter. Stand by for a special announcement. (*Pause.*)

STEFAN : Ladies, Sisters, I join you in rebellion. (*Lowers hands, sits.*)

ANNOUNCER : This is June 1st, 1980, and it is Anniversary Day, the day of the founding of the State Flag thirty years ago. We will begin the proceedings with the singing of the State Anthem by Brother Belcanto of the State Opera House. After this, Controller Brother Joseph Prosper of District 04,267 will deliver the Annual Inspirational Address on the Flag to the schools. Here is Signor Belcanto :

[*Belcanto sings.*]

ANTHEM OF THE FLAG

Salute the Flag of many hues
In Freedom's sacred name.
The Brave New World has come to stay,
Our voices all proclaim.

The Shirt will wave a thousand years.
Through battle or through breeze,
The Shirt that caused the tyrant hosts
To tremble on their knees.

[At the opening of the accompaniment switch on spot light and blower.]

[After the Solo by BELCANTO, a choir of children's voices might repeat.]

ANNOUNCER : Here is Brother Prosper.

PROSPER (*from Studio*) : Good afternoon, schools. To-day is Flag Day and I want to tell you something about our Flag and how it had its beginning thirty years ago. In your school, over the teacher's desk, you have often seen a small shirt hung up and may have wondered what it meant. That little flag has hung there for thirty years and I want to tell you something about it. You are not taught much history to-day, because a wise man once said that history is all bunk. But the history of our State Flag is real history. Well, children, about forty years ago there was a world war between the forces of tyranny and the forces of Freedom. After a bitter struggle the tyrants were defeated and peace was proclaimed by the victorious Allies. But the peace was not very peaceful at first. So many people had made elaborate plans for the establishment of a New World that there was great confusion. The New World planners formed themselves into groups and there was much rivalry between them and as they each thought their plan was the best and all the others no good at all, the world was full of quarrelling, angry men. These groups adopted a coloured shirt to represent their opinions. The wearing of uniforms had been prohibited by the Peace Conference but nothing was said about shirts. Well, there were so many groups of World Planners, each group with its own pet scheme, that all the standard colours had to be used and many tints just off the primary colours. Thus there was the Black Shirt of the British Fascists, the crimson of the British Communists, the salmon pink of the Labour Party, the dirty white of the I.L.P., the yellow of the conscientious objectors, the pea green of the Commonwealth Party. The anti-Vansittarts never wore shirts but painted their hairy chests with all the colours of the rainbow ; then there was the spotted purple of the Trotskyites, the red, white and blue of the Tories, the khaki of the demobbed

soldiers, the navy blue of the Merchant Navy and many others. The League of Civil Servants and Permanent Officials adopted a novel sort of shirt made entirely of red tape. Well, all these factions created much trouble and bloodshed. They fought each other in the streets, on the beaches and in country public-houses. The Allied Peace Commissioners were in despair until by a wise move they appointed the great Josef Stalin to be Dictator of the Western World, and gave him full powers to liquidate the situation. This was in the year 1950. This great man, Stalin, by a masterstroke, solved the problem for all time. He prohibited the manufacture of all shirts except by a State Factory which he set up. This factory produced a shirt which was a combination of all and every recognised colour, hue and tint. A shirt of the State pattern was then issued to everyone in free exchange for the coloured shirt he was wearing. After a short period anyone found wearing any but a State shirt was liquidated without trial, due warning having been given so that there could be no excuse. Once everyone was attired in the State shirt, all trouble ceased, for each faction had its own particular colour incorporated in the shirt he was wearing and no doubt persuaded himself that it predominated. The Peace and Planning Commissioners were delighted with the success of Josef Stalin's clever scheme and it was then decided to adopt the shirt as the State Flag for Arianaria. So, children, that is the story of the State Flag, and its lesson to us all is, that all opinions have their use provided they blend together in support of the State.

ANNOUNCER : Thank you, Brother Prosper. Listen to-morrow, children, to the story of Bingo the Broncho Buster. Good-night, children (*short pause and then with unction*) everywhere.

[END OF BROADCAST.]

[SMART *relaxes with relief and stretches his cramped muscles.* GARDENER, MASHA and BUTLER, *who have given a much less rigorous salute, stretch and retire.*]

SMART : The Controller was not in his usual form. Very mild and rambling. Signs of age, I think. The usual platitudes and, of course, all that tosh about Stalin, his hero. It's time all that was forgotten, and what use is it to the children to be constantly reminded of the bad old times?

ELEANOR : Nothing of the sort. I thought he was splendid and this year he left out all that stuff about the State can do no wrong. That's no use to children either.

SMART : That should have been kept in, in my opinion, speaking as a junior official of the State. Of course, the State can do no wrong.

MRS. L. : Meaning that a junior official of the State can do no wrong.

SMART : As a private individual he might, but as an official of the State, acting in the interests of the State, he must be right in his duties, if he is zealous in carrying them out.

ELEANOR : I suppose Stalin could do no wrong when he liquidated several thousand Germans after the Great War, and Stalin was the head of a State, wasn't he ?

MRS. L. : Young people, you were not alive then. I was and I tell you that Stalin saved Europe from another war which the Germans had planned for 1965. I remember how indignant the British were when Stalin hanged Hitler without a trial. Strung him up to a lamp-post in Berlin like the foul dog he was, together with thousands of other guilty Germans. The British Labour Party and an English Bishop sent a protest to Stalin, and an Irish comic journalist named Bernard Shaw sent him a 500 word cablegram saying Hitler was no worse than Churchill and in any case the British started the war. Of course, no one took any notice of Shaw. He was a mad Irishman living under the protection of the British Commonwealth and making a fortune out of the British people, who thoroughly enjoyed his satires on them and their most cherished beliefs. If he had lived in Eire and said half as much against the Southern Irish he would have been stoned to death by an irate mob. The Irish, unlike the English, have no sense of humour and don't like being made fun of.

ELEANOR : But when Stalin received the message from Shaw and the Labour Party, what did he do ?

MRS. L. : Do ? He told the Labour Party where they got off, and made rude noises by radio at Shaw. It has never been made

public what he did with the actual message. I have my own idea however.

[ELEANOR and MRS. L. *roar with laughter*. SMART *looks down his nose* and STEFAN *titters*.]

ELEANOR : Prosper should be here any minute. It's lucky being so close to the Broadcasting Bureau. I think we ought to celebrate the occasion with cocktails. Stefan, ring for Ponsonby.

[BUTLER *enters*.]

BUTLER : You rang, Madam ?

ELEANOR : Yes, Ponsonby. We are expecting the Master and Inspector Snooper any moment. I think we will try that new cocktail which the State Brewery has just invented. It is highly praised by connoisseurs, so I am told. Something quite unique and appetising.

BUTLER : Very good, Madam. (*Going*.)

ELEANOR : Oh, Ponsonby. What did you tell me the new cocktail is made of? I know it is non-alcoholic, of course. It wouldn't be allowed if it were not, I know.

BUTLER : Madam, the eminent State Chemist at the head of the Research Department has been at work for years, I understand. The New World Cocktail is described by experts as a choice blend of the juice of carrots with a dash of lemon juice and a clove. Non-alcoholic of course, Madam. Very piquant with an ambrosial bouquet, so I have been led to understand.

ELEANOR : Serve them up at once, please, Ponsonby. I am impatient to sample this wonderful new brew.

Mrs. L. : Not for me, I beseech you, friends. I am an old woman and my stomach is not constant. May I be excused? I wasn't weaned on carrot juice.

[*Exit BUTLER*.]

[*Noises off*. Enter PROSPER and SNOOPER.]

PROSPER : Well, here we are, brothers and sisters. I don't think you've met our Inspector-General, Brother Snooper. (*Introduction*.)

[Enter BUTLER with cocktails, which he hands round. MRS. L. shudders when the tray is presented to her.]

[They all seat themselves and conversation is general.]

PROSPER (to SNOOPER) : You are staying to dinner, Brother.

SNOOPER : I'm sorry, Brother, but I have to preside at a special meeting of the Security Police at six o'clock. There have been several murders lately in this district and we suspect an underground movement directed against State officials. Your local coroners have been very lax, sometimes accepting a verdict of Excusable Homicide, at other times even remanding the accused to the State Sanatorium as suffering from an acute attack of cerebro-officialitis. The Grand Council of State are also seriously concerned with the want of discipline in this Section. I have the President of the Council's authority to take this matter up with you, Brother Prosper, and they trust that with your earnest co-operation there will be a tightening up of affairs locally. We must leave no avenue unexplored—

PROSPER : No stone unturned. Very good, Inspector. If you can finish your Security Conference in reasonable time, do come back and spend a pleasant evening with us.

SNOOPER : Very well, Controller. For the present, good-day to all. (*Salutes.*)

SMART : I'm going your way, Brother. I have a lot to say to you. (*Both exit.*)

MRS. L. : What an amiable young man. (*Sarcastically.*) Cerebro-officialitis, did he say? How funny. Now I know what I was suffering from during the Great War. I think most people had it. You have no idea, Eleanor, what we had to put up with. My poor dear husband had an apoplectic fit when the Clothing Commissioners prohibited turn-ups to his trousers. It shortened his life, it was such a shock. "Can't the war," he said, "be won without the Government meddling with my trousers?" He wrote to Churchill about it, but got no satisfaction, so he took his trousers to the House of Lords and they turned them down. We hoped when the war ended that all these restrictions would cease.

PROSPER : The war didn't end them, my dear. It was worse during the first years of peace and reconstruction. There were so many ministries tucked away all over the country who absolutely refused to cease their functions and defied the authorities to close them down. In the end they had to be smoked out with poison gas. Those who survived dug themselves in in other remote parts of the country and started issuing forms with feverish renewed energy. Why there are still a few ministries left somewhere in the North of Scotland. I had a form from one of them the other day asking me to make a return of the gas-masks issued to this district in 1940. Forty years ago, well, well. They still draw their salaries of course, from another surviving ministry tucked away somewhere safe.

[*Shouts off and firing of a shot-gun.*]

[STEFAN and ELEANOR promptly take cover under table. PROSPER and MRS. L. remain serenely seated.]

[*Enter GARDENER pushing STEPHENS before him carrying shot-gun.*]

TRUPENNY (*the Gardener*) : I caught him robbing our fowl pen and fired a shot at him. He made no resistance, so I brought him along here, sir.

STEPHENS : Pardon me, there are two false statements in your report. It was not a fowl pen and the shot was fired in the air, not at me. I've been fired at too many times not to know when the firer knew what he was aiming at. They've missed me up to now, although they threw everything they had at me in Italy, and they didn't throw rabbit shot there. Rabbit shot, indeed! Excuse my mirth. Do I look like a rabbit?

PROSPER : Kindly explain Mr.— Mr.—

STEPHENS : Stephens (*looking at him fixedly*), but General to you, Brigadier.

PROSPER : Great Stalin, why it's Buggy Stephens, Buggy Stephens, after all these years. Why, we last met in Berlin in 1944 after the great surrender. You may go, Trupenny. (*Exit GARDENER.*) Well, well, well, dear old Buggy. I am delighted to see you again.

STEPHENS : Put it there, chum. I'm sorry about my little bit of scrounging. I was passing by your location when I heard a

foolish hen proclaiming to the world with strident pride that she had just laid an egg. As she had deposited it in the hedge bottom, it was second nature to me to nip over and annex it. A thousand apologies (*hands egg to PROSPER*) but the egg supplied me last week on my ration was distinctly nifty and the State Egg Official refused me an indent for an up-to-date model. Hence I succumbed to a sudden temptation. A thousand apologies, Brigadier. It's a wonder I didn't scrounge the bird. I must have grown stale.

PROSPER : That's quite all right, old chum. We shall have a lot to talk about ; you must have dinner with us. Here, Phœbe, Eleanor, let me introduce my old Chief. We fought right through North Africa and Italy and finished up Unter den Linden.

[*Introductions.*]

Here, Stefan, meet General Stephens.

STEPHENS : Stefan, Stefan, why I believe it's my brother Tom's little blinking Billy Stephens got up like a Russian Ballet Dancer. Well, well, well. He was such a pink pimply little cherub when he was sent to the State Seminary, aged five. (*Exit STEFAN.*) Tom was a widower, you know. He died ten years ago.

[*PROSPER has meanwhile rung for BUTLER, who brings in cocktail.*]

PROSPER : Yes, Stefan is my secretary. It was by my desire that he and my wife's maid wear Russian costume. I haven't forgotten how much we owed to that intrepid nation during the Great War. Where should we have been without them? Stalin and his brave Russians, soldiers and civilians, too.

STEPHENS : Don't forget that little England held the fort for a twelve months all alone, while Russia and America were making up their minds to come in. We had a tough time of it until they did, I admit, but we stuck it in spite of the odds against us, and don't forget Churchill's brave soldiers and civilians. Didn't he say "this was their finest hour?"

STEPHENS : Well, here's how. (*Tosses his off.*) Oh, my good Godfather! (*Gasps.*) What puppy water is that?

PROSPER : The new State cocktail, Brother, non-alcoholic.

STEPHENS : You're telling me, brother. Well, let them feed it to the chickens ; it's no use to me.

[*BROADCAST WARNING.*]

" This is the State Broadcasting Bureau and this is Announcer 75246 speaking.

Foreign News : The fighting in Southern Ireland continues. The I.R.A. burnt an effigy of the English novelist, Bernard Shaw, outside the Abbey Theatre in Dublin yesterday. The De Valeraites have proclaimed their neutrality but are arming all their adherents with bren guns. The Southern Irish Conscientious Objectors have established a camp near Bray and have shot several constables sent to arrest their leaders. Southern Ireland or Eire, it will be remembered, refused to enter the New Order or to become a member section of Western Arianania thirty years ago, preferring to live in peace and amity within their own borders.

Home News : After considerable research the Chief Chemist of the State Brewery has produced a Synthetic Whiskey which will be on sale shortly without coupons. It smells like whiskey, looks like whiskey, and tastes like cold China tea. It is guaranteed absolutely non-alcoholic.

[STEPHENS *chuckles and pats bottle in his pocket.*]

[END OF BROADCAST.]

PROSPER : The news from Eire is still distressing. It's such a pity. Ireland was saved from the terrible fate of the occupied countries by her proximity to England and the British Fleet. I'm afraid Eire wasn't at all grateful.

STEPHENS : Grateful ! Good Gad, not a little bit. De Valera went on babbling about Oliver Cromwell until he was shot by a member of the I.R.A.

ELEANOR : What was the I.R.A. ?

STEPHENS : Oh, the Irish Republican Army, who waged war on England by placing bombs in public lavatories and railway cloakrooms. Stout fellows, what !

ELEANOR : But what cowardly brutes to attack the civilian population.

STEPHENS : Oh yes, they started that form of atrocity before the Huns developed it, but they were only amateurs and their efforts were very crude.

ELEANOR : No doubt, but innocent people must have suffered.

PROSPER : Yes, and people who had never heard of the I.R.A.

ELEANOR : Well, I had better go and change my dress if you will excuse me.

[Exit.]

STEPHENS (*Draws PROSPER to desk and produces a large flask ; he fills two glasses and hands PROSPER one of them*) : Try this, old sport. This is *not* a State product.

PROSPER (*Tastes and tastes again*) : Great Stalin ! Oh, boy ! Here Phœbe, come here a minute. (*He hands her the other glass.*) I want your opinion of this. Something Buggy has brought us.

MRS. L. (*Looks suspiciously at it and smells it*) : H'm, it looks like whiskey—it smells like whiskey (*takes a little sip*), it tastes like whiskey (*slowly drinks remainder and then with intense conviction*), it is whiskey ! But my dear man, how did you, how can you ? Why, you've taken me back thirty or forty years. Bless you, bless you ! (*Embraces him.*)

PROSPER : Yes, indeed. My youth also comes back to me. But, I say, Buggy, old sport, how is it done ? There's been no whiskey in this country for thirty years. The manufacture was forbidden by the State Health Controller. There is a severe penalty for anyone found making it.

STEPHENS : Simple. If you can't get anyone to do a job for you, do it yourself is my motto. I make my own. A pretty fair tippie, what ? I've had a lot of practice and now my product is perfect.

PROSPER : But it is forbidden to manufacture spirituous liquor.

STEPHENS : *Es ist verboten* was the watchword of most of the New World planners after the Great War. Anything that gave the people pleasure was *verboten*. It was a revival of the worst times of Puritan England. No theatres or entertainments on Sundays, closing down of the pubs, and the substitution of Near

Beer Bars—*near* beer, gosh, about as near as Nova Scotia—with moral talks on the radio to sustain you while you mopped up the cat-lap. Well, old chum, what would *you* have done? I can't live without whiskey. The State Radio Doctor says alcohol is poison and shortens life. Well, I've drunk whiskey since I was 20 and I'm 80 next birthday, so what! If my whiskey was cut off, I should probably curl up and die immediately.

PROSPER: But how do you manage to make this—poison?

STEPHENS: Well, after I was de-mobbed I managed to get a job in Scotland with a whiskey distilling firm and became their general manager. When the order came to close down all distilleries I removed the experimental laboratory plant to my house. It will produce a gallon a week, rather more than I need, of course. A few weeks ago I took that little place next door and set up my experimental plant there. The young Housing and Estates Inspector who came to see if everything was up to State regulations was very interested. I told him I was conducting research experiments for a new fertiliser. He said "What a delightful smell." Of course, he was too young to know anything about whiskey and gave me a certificate to carry on, wishing me State Speed in my good work. I got an indent to purchase grain for my fowls through his kindness.

PROSPER: Fowls—then why scrounge my eggs, brother?

STEPHENS: There ain't no fowls, brother. I shall have to borrow some of yours when the State Fowl Pen Inspector pays me a visit. What about another wee drappie? The grain I am allowed to buy is for private reasons of my own.

MRS. L.: Well, just half a snifter, brother. (STEPHENS officiates.)

STEPHENS: Now I'll rush off to don my glad rags and then I'll help eat your dinner. I am so glad we are next door neighbours. We shall have a quieter time than we had forty years ago. What! I've forgotten what it's like to sleep in a dug-out. We fought that war to end all wars, and so far we've been successful. If there's ever another war it will be the fault of the present generation and judging by what I've seen of some of them, it might do them a bit of good. They're growing far too soft and arrogant.

PROSPER : Let's hope the growth of international interdependence and the abolition of nationalism will continue to make war impossible.

STEPHENS : Well, it hasn't done so in Southern Ireland, has it ?

PROSPER : Perhaps not, but to fight is an Irishman's second religion and first instinct.

STEPHENS : Gad, yes. We had some bonny fighters from Eire in Italy. They simply loved it. Their war cry was "to Hell with Orangeism and bloody end to Hitler." Well, so long, old sport ; I'll be off.

[*BROADCAST ALERT.*]

ANNOUNCER : This is the State Broadcasting Bureau of Arianaria, Western Section, and this is Announcer 24,568 speaking. Here is to-day's great thought :

STEPHENS : Oh Hell ! (*Rushes out, followed by PROSPER and MRS. L.*)

ANNOUNCER : " Let us then be up and doing
With a heart for any fate ;
Still achieving, still pursuing
Learn to labour and to wait."

[*Curtain slowly descends by the end of the recitation.*]

ACT II

Evening of the same day. As it is a lovely June evening, the glow of the setting sun shines through French window.

In this Act evening dress will be worn by all except INSPECTOR SNOOPER and GARDENER. PROSPER wears a coloured band across his shirt front of the State Colours. SMART and STEFAN also wear similar but much narrower bands, STEPHENS has no band but wears Great War decorations on his jacket.

STEFAN and MASHA are arranging room.

STEFAN : Well, Mavis !

MASHA : Masha.

STEFAN : Masha then. Are you going to give up flirting with Smart or not ?

MASHA : What do you mean by flirting ? He's only kissed me once, perhaps twice.

STEFAN : Hell ! Can't you see how you hurt me ? I'm not going to stand it, I tell you.

MASHA : Stand it ! He hasn't kissed you, has he ?

STEFAN : If he tried to I'd bite his silly face off.

MASHA (*laughing*) : Oh, you silly Billy Stephens !

STEFAN : Stefan to you, Sister.

MASHA : You were State christened William Stephens by the Controller of Ethics, but I'll call you Stefan then. Now don't be a jealous little boy. Your Mavis loves you and Smarty Smart has no attraction for me whatever. (*Sidles up to him.*) Let's be friends, Stefan.

STEFAN (*mollified, embraces and kisses her*) : Well, then.

MASHA : Oo, you kiss a lot better than Smart.

STEFAN : The Hell I do !

[MASHA *exits R.*]

[*Enter SNOOPER from garden followed by SMART.*]

SMART : Oh ! There you are, Inspector. I slipped away from the dinner table hoping you would be coming back. The two old fossils are swopping yarns about their experiences in the Great War and the ladies are sucking it all in. Stefan, unlock the desk, there'll just be time to have a run through. (STEFAN obeys. SNOOPER and SMART go to desk.) Keep a sharp look out, Stefan. (*Picks up bundle of papers.*) Look here, Inspector. The Up-lift Class is not being held, the Study Circle for Higher Economics has been discontinued and look at this Card Index of the Inhabitants of this Section, scarcely one filled in. (SNOOPER has a look.)

SNOOPER : Here's one, Brother. Let me see (*reading*). Card Index for Section 04,267 Western District. Name, George Snufkins, male, aged 30, married, ten children, occupation, Assistant Storekeeper, State Clothing Department, Austerity Sub-Section. Under the heading, "Remarks of Controller" he has actually put "no consideration for his wife."

SMART : Instead of recommending him to the Chief of the Propaganda Bureau as a zealous servant of the State. That reminds me. What do you think he said the other day at a meeting of Sub-Inspectors of the Sewage Farm? He told them there were three stages of damnation, to be damned, to be doubly damned, and to be a zealous officer of the Department.

SNOOPER : Disgraceful, holding us up to ridicule. I shall report that also. (*Looking through card index and files.*) Everything seems to be in a hopeless muddle here. He has no sense of official routine. Look, in the Statistics Folder there are several foolscap sheets with poetry written on them. Poetry—and official stationery at that. That's how he wastes State time. Poetry at his time of life ! Second childhood.

SMART : Just as I told you this afternoon when you were on your way to the Security Police Conference. What shall you do, Inspector ?

SNOOPER : I shall do my duty, brother, no matter how painful. Officials in high places must be an example of efficiency and duty. How else can the lower orders look up to them ?

SMART : True, how can they ?

SNOOPER : That is one good thing we learn about the old world when nationalities were allowed, before the world was divided up into Western and Northern Arianaria and Eastern and Southern Panaria. The stronger nations in those days kept the weaker nations in their places. Look how Germany tamed the Scandinavians. The Germans were super-men. They tamed wild beasts, they tamed the Russian bear.

SMART : But didn't the Russians later on tame the Germans ? The Russians, Americans and British occupied Germany, didn't they ?

SNOOPER : The Germans were never tamed, they were never defeated. They will rise again some day. They were betrayed by treachery and lies and superior numbers.

SMART : Well, I never thought you would take that view, Inspector, you a high servant of the State.

SNOOPER : Our State is founded on Germanic ideals. Eminent Germans served on the Great World Planning Council. They were the inspirers of our present constitution. Being cleverer and more determined than other members of the Council, they carried everything they suggested. The British Socialist Party insisted on the Germans serving on the Council. So did the Trades Union Congress of which your father was a member.

STEFAN : Hist, someone is coming.

SMART : Let us take a stroll round the garden, brother.
(*All three exit through French window.*)

[*Enter PONSONBY carrying a tray with a quart glass jug filled with liquid. He places it on the table as STEPHENS enters.*]

STEPHENS : Ah, old sport, what have you there ? Something better than the toast and water flavoured with parsnips which you served at dinner. My hat, what belly-wash !

BUTLER : Yes, sir. This is very special, sir. It is the New Order Liqueur. Only recently perfected and released for public consumption.

STEPHENS : Non-alcoholic, of course.

BUTLER : Yes, of course, sir, non-alcoholic.

STEPHENS : Well, if it's not a State secret, what's in it ?

BUTLER : It was broadcast last week, sir, so I opine it is public property. I made a note of the formula so that I could be in a position to mix the ingredients together in order to produce the finished article.

STEPHENS : Well, Ponsonby—your name, I opine, is Ponsonby, is it not ?

BUTLER : Yes, sir, Ponsonby is my humble patronymic.

STEPHENS : Good Gad, you amaze me.

BUTLER : If you would like to hear the formula, sir, I have it, already committed to memory.

STEPHENS : Splendid, Ponsonby ; have at it.

BUTLER : Take three liquid ounces of concentrated dandelion juice, one ounce of vinegar—

STEPHENS : Pardon my interrupting you, Ponsonby, did you say *dandelion* juice ?

BUTLER : That, sir, was the purport of my communication.

STEPHENS : Proceed with your tale of horror.

BUTLER : To the dandelion juice add an ounce of white vinegar and half an ounce of treacle—

STEPHENS : Oh, my giddy aunt !—

BUTLER : Proceeding, sir—

STEPHENS : In your recital—

BUTLER : Yes, sir, in my recital, the next ingredient to be added is two fluid ounces of cold tea and—

STEPHENS : Make the gruel thick and slab.

BUTLER : Gruel, sir ?

STEPHENS : Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

BUTLER : Sir !

STEPHENS : Nothing, Ponsonby, nothing, just a momentary aberration. Continue—

BUTLER : The ingredients should be well mixed in a cocktail shaker, sir, and served with a sprig of parsley and some grated nutmeg and ice.

STEPHENS : Friend Ponsonby, see yonder aspidistra ? Good, give me that jug. I am an expert on fertilisation. See, I pour three parts of the State Liqueur on to the aspidistra and in three months it will grow cocoa-nuts. Now I replace (*taking large bottle from his pocket or from a bag*) the evacuated contents with a liquid variously known in former years as tonsil gargle, coffin polish, a bit of all right and various other—patronymics, I think was the word you used. Well, stir, and now, Brother Ponsonby, deign to taste of the brew and give me your unbiassed opinion in your own simple and chaste phraseology.

BUTLER (*pours out half a glass, sips and swallows*) : Blimey !

STEPHENS : You've said it. The charm's wound up. Ponsonby, this is a secret between us, a deed without a name.

BUTLER : Discretion, sir, is my middle name. I was a clerk in the War Office in the Great War, sir. I had to preserve many State confidences.

STEPHENS : Gad, you were ! I've often wanted to meet one of you blighters.

BUTLER : I gather, sir, that you fought in Italy.

STEPHENS : Italy, Ponsonby, was one of several scenes of my gory encounters.

BUTLER : I understand it was extremely cold in the Ap—Apennines, sir.

STEPHENS : Cold ? gad, yes. Brass monkeys dare not stir out of doors, but the Army had to be up and doing whatever the weather.

BUTLER : Indeed, sir. The climatic conditions must have been extremely unpleasant.

STEPHENS : They were, Ponsonby, they were. Now Ponsonby, touching that jug of nectar—no, don't touch it, that was a figure of speech. What I wish to convey is this ; when you serve out the liqueurs with the coffee, you must do it without a blink or a blimey, and Ponsonby, take those tom-fool glasses away and replace them with pony or claret glasses, pronto.

BUTLER : Very good, sir, your wishes shall be attended to. (*Exit with liqueur glasses after a sniff at the jug.*)

STEPHENS (*snoops round the room looking at pictures and lighting a cigar, re-enter BUTLER with larger glasses*) : That's the ticket, my simple Ponsonby. I could have employed you as my batman during the Great War, but no doubt you had a much more important job at the War Office, keeping important documents and passing them round the Departments—passed to you, eh?

BUTLER : Yes, sir, I issued millions of forms, sir.

STEPHENS : Yes, I had a few thousands of them. My men found them very useful, very.

BUTLER : I venture the opinion, sir, that you were very popular with your men.

STEPHENS (*with pride*) : Yes, Ponsonby. The men called me Buggy.

BUTLER : Indeed, sir, If you will pardon me mentioning it, I have always understood that it was another word they called you somewhat similar in sound, sir, but more of a noun than an adjective, sir, if I may say so.

STEPHENS : H'm, that will be all, Ponsonby.

[*Exit BUTLER and enter MRS. L.*]

MRS. L. : There you are, General, enjoying your smoke. Do you make those yourself, you clever man?

STEPHENS : Gad no, my ability has its limits. Black Market, dear lady. Cigarette?

MRS. L. : Thank you, General. How's the distillery?

STEPHENS : I suppose, like me, you found the toast and water a little—shall we say attenuated, a sort of diluted pussy-milk. Well, your Uncle Stephens has a surprise in store for you. When the estimable Ponsonby serves the coffee, then, your fairy Godfather will produce some pre-1914 strength. Pre-1914, when the world was fit for decent people to live in, what! Keep this information under your hat, sister, and watch the results. In the meantime let us stroll into the garden and I'll tell you the story of the Welsh shepherd.

MRS. L. : I hope it's suitable for such as are of riper years, General.

[*They exit laughing.*]

[ELEANOR comes from R. as SMART enters from garden.]

SMART : You've managed to tear yourself away from the old codgers fighting their battles over again. I couldn't stick it. I notice one of them, General Stephens, has just taken Sister Langdale up the garden path. It's a gorgeous evening. Shall we join them ?

ELEANOR : Later, perhaps. I want a cigarette and I want a serious talk with you, Winstone. They christened you Winstone after a very great man (*lights cigarette*). It's a pity parents cannot foresee how their children will turn out before they name them.

SMART : Meaning, of course, that you don't consider me great.

ELEANOR : Well, do you think you are yourself ?

SMART : We can't all be super-men, but, however insignificant a man is, he can but do his duty in that station in which the State has placed him. I am only a Deputy Assistant Controller, but I have done the State some service. I discovered the underground movement for the re-opening of public-houses and country inns, and some of the ring-leaders were arrested and sent to the State Concentration Camp.

ELEANOR : How brave of you. Do you know, from what Prosper and Phœbe have told me, country inns were rather jolly places. They used to motor out to them in the days before people flew everywhere.

SMART : Dens of infamy, more likely. Why, they drank intoxicating liquors in those inns, men and women together. You know the Radio Doctor has warned us all of the danger of drinking alcohol. Haven't you seen pictures of the livers people who drank had in those days ?

ELEANOR : Rubbish ! People don't or never did drink alcohol. Alcoholic drink if you like, but not alcohol. The Radio Doctor might just as well and truthfully have called milk drinkers, drinkers of casein, because milk contains casein. Besides, milk is dangerous unless boiled. You don't have to boil beer to make it fit to drink or so I've been told. I've never tasted any myself, worse luck. As for livers, better an enlarged liver than a jaundiced spleen.

SMART : Well, what about the serious talk, sister ? I'm all ears.

ELEANOR (*with difficulty*) : I find it hard to begin. You see we've been good friends and in many ways you've been rather a dear, but the time has come to stop. We've flirted desperately, but I've never led you on and I think we should stop before it's too late. I wouldn't do anything to hurt Prosper; he's been a good husband to me and I respect him more than I can say, so, dear boy, it must come to an end, our infatuation. Believe me when I say that it will be for the happiness of both of us eventually even if it hurts us a little at first.

SMART : You don't want to hurt Prosper, but you don't mind hurting me.

ELEANOR : Two people only are hurt. If I consented to go away with you, there would be three and that third one the best of the bunch. That's why I wouldn't wait in Paris for you to-day. I couldn't be mean to Prosper. Then there's another thing. It's nothing to do with me of course, but young Stefan is very fond of Masha, and I know you have been trying to flirt with her.

SMART : Oh ! So that's it, eh ? Jealousy. Well, it's a sign you are fond of me if I can make you jealous. As for Masha, the little slut, Stefan can keep her to himself for all I care.

ELEANOR : I care for Stefan and Masha's future and Stefan's peace of mind and you have no right to flatter Masha with your attentions which obviously mean nothing to you. I don't like your attitude, brother, you have not improved of late. You have grown more intolerant, more self-centred, more—oh, what's the use !

SMART : My attitude to you is I think clear. I've told you I love you. Don't you love me ? You ought to do, I think I deserve that of you.

ELEANOR : I thought I did once, but now I wonder. Love is a strange thing. A woman may find a man physically attractive but might not care to spend her life with him all the same.

[*They both rise.*]

SMART (*insinuatingly*) : Well, if you can't see your way to spend the rest of your life with me, what about spending a night or two with me, eh ?

ELEANOR (*smacking him in the face*) : You beast !

[PROSPER enters. SMART is rubbing his face, ELEANOR is flaming with indignation.]

PROSPER : Hallo, what's all this ? (*He is puzzled.*)

ELEANOR : Oh, nothing, Smart said something disrespectful—

PROSPER : About the State ?

ELEANOR : Yes—a state, and I'm afraid I lost my temper and struck him.

PROSPER : Well, well. I never thought my little Eleanor was particularly zealous about the State. But anger is wrong, dear; it never helps unless it is righteous anger in another's cause.

ELEANOR : I'm afraid I have been very lax in my duty to—the State, but I've learnt my lesson and I intend to reform. It's fortunately not too late. I've learnt my lesson.

PROSPER : Good. The State does sometimes seem to impose restrictions on us and may appear at times to curb our inclinations and desires. I am surprised at you, Brother Smart. I always thought your conduct to the State was irreproachable. I am sorry though that Eleanor should have taken the law into her own hands. Any dereliction of duty on the part of one of my subordinates should be reported to me. I am the person to deal with such lapses. Have you any explanation to offer, Brother Smart, or any apology ?

SMART : It was a misunderstanding. Sister Eleanor took me up on a point of some importance to me personally, and I had the worst of the argument.

ELEANOR : Argument !

PROSPER : Well, well, let's hear no more about it. Eleanor is no doubt sorry she lost her temper and struck you. Shake hands, brother and sister.

[*They are confused and show no alacrity to bury the hatchet. Fortunately the Broadcast Alert is at that moment started. The rest of the cast, being up the garden, do not come in.*]

[PROSPER and SMART stand to attention. ELEANOR does so reluctantly, out of consideration for her husband.]

BROADCAST.

ANNOUNCER : " This is the State Broadcasting Bureau and this is Announcer 24,568 speaking : The war in Southern Ireland continues. Sinn Fein troops have occupied Howth Island. The I.R.A. and the Trotskyites are fighting their own little battle near Wexford. The De Valeraites and the Labourites are fighting another bitterly contested war where the mountains of Mourne roll down to the sea. The rest of the population are relatively passive except for sporadic attacks on the police and each other.

Home News : The Anniversary Sports Western Section 04,267 will be held to-morrow in the Strength through Joy Stadium. Entrants for the Puss-in-the-Corner competition should attend at 11.30 sharp. The Hunt-the-Slipper Contest has been postponed, as the Official State Slipper was purloined at the previous contest.

[END OF BROADCAST.]

[SMART goes out through French window ; he meets SNOOPER coming in, stops him and whispers. They both retire into the garden.]

PROSPER (to ELEANOR) : My dear, I sometimes wonder whether I did right in persuading you to marry a man old enough to be your father, but I've always tried to make you happy.

ELEANOR : I did not need much persuasion. After all I was over 30 when we married. A woman ought to know her own mind at that age and there was no one else I was keen on. You may be older in years but your mind has remained young. In some ways I seem much older than you. Joseph, how old would your boy have been had he—lived ?

PROSPER : Let me see, I was married in 1930. Harry was born in 1932, so he would have been 48 now. He might have been married with children and I a grandfather.

ELEANOR (with intense sympathy) : It must have been terrible to lose him—and your wife, so soon.

PROSPER : Yes, dear, it was—terrible. They were both killed in a blitz on Bournemouth in 1941 when I was with the Eighth Army in Libya. I had sent them to Bournemouth thinking they would be safer than in London.

ELEANOR : My poor dear, how you must have suffered.

PROSPER : So many did, Eleanor. I was not the only one. There was a great community of suffering. Sacred suffering in a great cause.

ELEANOR : And yet you have never grown bitter and revengeful. Your heart is full of love and compassion for others.

PROSPER : Bitterness and hatred do not make a peaceful old age, dear. When the heart remains young there is no old age ; when every day brings fresh interests there can be no regrets for the past. Yet some people would consider me a back number, almost Edwardian or at any rate Georgian. I must confess there were some things about the old era that I miss in these days of State Worship and Efficiency. There was more individuality and less mass-production. But I'm afraid I'm uttering treason. You won't report me to the Gestapo, or its present day substitute ?

ELEANOR : Not unless you refuse me a cigarette.

[PROSPER supplies her and is about to light it, when she flings her arms round him and kisses him passionately, just as STEPHENS and MRS. L. enter from the garden.]

MRS. L. : Well, well, age cannot wither him. I am a poor old woman and no one wants to kiss me.

STEPHENS (*promptly kisses her*) : Wrong, my dear lady. Not only wants to but does.

MRS. L. : Well, I don't know, you were sitting on the fence all the time we were in the garden and never made the slightest advance.

STEPHENS : Madam, impossible. I am not a mugwump.

MRS. L. : What is a mugwump ?

STEPHENS : A man who sits on the fence with his mug on one side and his wump on the other.

ELEANOR : I'll go and hurry Ponsonby up with our coffee.

MRS. L. : Yes, do, dear. Fortunately on these light evenings we don't need to black-out before going to bed.

ELEANOR : Black-out ?

STEPHENS : A figure of speech, sister. It means nothing to the present generation.

ELEANOR : One of your old military commands, I suppose. Something to do with boot cleaning.

STEPHENS : Yes, lady. The Sergeant-Major always had to black the men's boots after they had gone to bed. They were very touchy if he failed in his duty.

[*Exit ELEANOR.*]

PROSPER : Just the same old Buggy, always leg pulling.

STEPHENS : Your estimable Butler, Ponsonby, tells me that the men had a variant of that name when alluding to me.

PROSPER : I fancy I heard it once or twice in the mess—during your absence.

STEPHENS : Quite likely. But that's a generation ago and people nowadays haven't the same sense of humour they had during the Great War, as far as I have observed. You are a State official and I suppose I shouldn't criticise my rulers, but I find it difficult to realise that my old junior Pussy Prosper now occupies so exalted a position.

MRS. L. : Pussy. Is that what they called him ? Fancy my brother Joseph being called Pussy by his men. And did they really and truly call him Pussy ?

STEPHENS : Yes, indeed. That and other things. You see whenever the barrage was at its worst Prosper used to hum and make a throaty noise and the men said it sounded like a dyspeptic old tom cat purring. 'Pussy Prosper,' old sport !

[*Digs PROSPER in the ribs.*]

PROSPER : Buggy Stephens, you old blighter.

[*Returns the dig.*]

STEPHENS : But seriously, don't you think there's a little too much officialism in the New World ? Too many people busily occupied in telling the others how they should live their lives ?

PROSPER : That has always been the way of mankind. On the one side the desire to dominate, on the other side, apathy, indolence, condonation of evil and the cowardice of appeasement. That was the real cause of the Great War. It will take many years to get rid of these conditions, but we are advancing. The worst of it is that the more comfortable people are, the less they are inclined to rebel against tyranny. Well fed slaves never revolt. In fact, slavery can only be abolished by free men. To-day there is a danger I admit of a system of contented slaves, so well fed, so protected, pampered and flattered that they accept and tolerate the many restrictions on their mental and spiritual freedom. I am waging a continual war against this apathy and I am meeting with support from those who *think*, but the vested interests of State officialism don't like it and I am constantly getting into trouble with some of them. But this struggle against the powers of darkness is a job for the young and the young to-day are too much given to their own personal pleasures. You see we have no unemployment to-day, everyone is well-fed, well-clothed and well-housed. They only work four or five hours a day. Major wars have ceased and minor ones are soon squashed by our own efficient Security Police Air Force. We haven't, of course, got rid of selfishness and envy, personal quarrels, family feuds, lying and deceit, but mankind is still striving to improve his nature. We have progressed quite a lot since the days of the cave men.

STEPHENS : But you won't improve it by State officials running round telling everyone not to do what they happen to be doing, especially if it's something they like doing.

PROSPER : I agree and admit that there is too much State Control, but in my Section I've let the people down lightly. I'm constantly receiving complaints from the higher command that I am growing very lax and they've sent that Inspector chap Snooper, I'm certain, to establish a case against me. He reminds me of some of those fanatical Germans we captured in Rome. There was one I remember who spat in the face of the Corporal who took him his breakfast. A jolly good breakfast too.

STEPHENS : Gad, I remember the swine, and there were quite a number like him.

MRS. L. : What did the Corporal do ?

PROSPER : He reported the incident to the Sergeant in charge.

MRS. L. : I should have slammed the breakfast tray in his face and reported it to the Marines !

PROSPER : He would have been court-martialled if he had, I'm afraid.

STEPHENS : Yes, after the surrender we were told not to be beastly to the Germans. The dear old British public would have done anything for them except punish them. An English Bishop said we mustn't have mass executions. Apparently he didn't mind half a dozen murderers being executed, but if a thousand men committed a thousand murders, then you mustn't hang the lot. However, thank God, we had a Stalin and he knew what to do, and did it.

PROSPER : Yes, he was a great man. The present generation has no idea how great. His name is only a memory to them. I often used to wish he could have come to England during the war and taken a share in the Government. There would have been no strikes if Stalin had had his way.

STEPHENS : Yes, his solution to the problem of strikes during the war was, I remember, to send the strikers to Leningrad during its siege. There was no coal there and the British miners could have had a rest from coal-getting by digging trenches for the Russian munition workers. The other strikers Stalin would have put to work in Russian munition factories on Russian food and pay. However, the British Labour Party turned down Stalin's suggestions and Churchill was too kind-hearted to force them, although he sympathised with Stalin's proposals. It made me ashamed of my country at the time to think how those heroes of Leningrad suffered and endured. They didn't draw £5 or £6 a week, Gad !

PROSPER : But our Merchant Seamen did not strike, brother, nor the Air Force, Army and Navy.

STEPHENS : No, thank God, or we should *all* have been sunk.

MRS. L. : That's enough of the bad old times. Couldn't we have a little broadcast while we are waiting for Ponsonby's coffee ? I hope it isn't State Substitute Coffee.

STEPHENS : That's another thing I dislike about your New World, being compelled by law to listen to all the State Broadcasts. Not that I do. There's always a technical hitch in my apparatus, fortunately.

PROSPER : But didn't you know, there's an alternative service which is optional? It consists of talks, lectures, plays, book reviews and so forth. We get first class music from the State Symphony Orchestra. You just turn this switch, in between State News Broadcasts and are bound to hear some lovely orchestra. (*Turns switch.*)

[*A very superior highly refanned woman's voice speaks.*]

ANNOUNCER : You are now to hear a selection of dance music by Sam Slubbins and his Sizzling Syncopators. The first item is a composition by this eminent band leader entitled : "When the moon is blew, I think of yew, yew beauty yew."

[*A horrible cacophony emerges.*]

STEPHENS and MRS. L. (*simultaneously*) : Oh, for the love of mike, put a sock in it.

[*PROSPER switches off.*]

PROSPER : There's still a small public for that sort of bilge, but it's dwindling. Only the illiterate non-intelligent minority like it. People with receding chins, vacuous faces and large ears lap it up with relish. The Bach and Beethoven Concerts at the Opera House are still the most popular of all the programmes given.

[*Enter SMART, SNOOPER and STEFAN from the garden.*]

PROSPER : Well, you three conspirators, have you decided on my deposition? (*Laughing.*)

SNOOPER : This is no laughing matter, Brother, I must have a very serious talk with you before I go back to headquarters to make my recommendations.

STEPHENS : Not to-night, comrade. We are celebrating to-night. Affairs of State must be postponed until the morrow.

SNOOPER : And who are you to give orders may I ask? I was not addressing you.

STEPHENS : One who was always accustomed to his order being obeyed, young fellow my lad.

SNOOPER : And supposing they were not ?

STEPHENS : They very seldom were disobeyed but if any misguided individual did disobey—well—but on this occasion they will be obeyed my lad. You keep your conference with Pussy until to-morrow.

SNOOPER : Do you know whom you are addressing ? I am the Inspector-General of the Western Section and can order your arrest for disrespect to an official of the State.

STEPHENS : It would require a whole Division of officials to balance the disrespect I feel for you and your tin-pot State.

SNOOPER (*nearly chokes with indignation*) : I will attend to you, brother, later. At the moment I am conferring with the Controller.

PROSPER : Very good, Inspector, but I must support my friend Stephens in his suggestion that we defer our conference until to-morrow. I am sure with your well-known toleration for the infirmities of age, you will pardon Brother Stephens' outburst. You see he is close on 80 and his ideas are too set to appreciate fully the zeal of an important officer of the State such as yourself. So do let us all be friends and enjoy a pleasant evening together.

SNOOPER : Very good, Controller. I will consider the incident closed for this evening. But the matter is only postponed, remember.

[*Enter PONSONBY and MASHA with tea, coffee, etc., followed by ELEANOR.*]

ELEANOR : I am so sorry we are late but Cook had run out of tea and all our coupons had been used up. I had to borrow some from the gardener's mother's sister.

[*All seat themselves and coffee and tea are served. STEPHENS draws PONSONBY to table on which stands the liqueur decanter and whispers to him, then STEPHENS comes down C.*]

STEPHENS : Ladies and gentlemen—sorry, I forgot, there are no ladies and gentlemen to-day. Brothers and Sisters, we are

assembled on an auspicious occasion. To-day, June 1st, nineteen hundred and eighty, is our brother Prosper's seventy-fifth birthday, and I am sure we shall all have much pleasure in drinking his health. I've known Pussy Prosper for over 40 years and always found him a jolly good sport. I'm no hand at speechifying, so if our friend Ponsonby will serve out the juice, I'll propose the toast. I may say that this is the latest State liqueur invented by the Research Chemist of the State Brewery. Our brother Ponsonby has assembled the ingredients, I have personally tested and tasted his brew and can heartily recommend it. Ponsonby, charge the glasses. (*PONSONBY does so.*) Now friends, if you are all ready—here's to good old Pussy, may he live long and happily and to Hell with his enemies, if any. (*Drinks.*)

[*They all drink and show various expressions of joy, surprise and satisfaction. SNOOPER scowls but smacks his lips.*]

STEPHENS : Have one on the house, Ponsonby.

[*PONSONBY drinks and starts the applause which all take up except SNOOPER and SMART.*]

BUTLER : Speech ! Speech !

STEPHENS : Pussy will now reply, but he mustn't be left out of the tonsil lubrication. Fill his glass, Ponsonby. Drink, Pussy, drink.

PROSPER : Friends, this is very sweet of you. I'd no idea that this was going to happen. I expect Eleanor told you (*to STEPHENS*) or my sister. Well, I'm not going to make a speech, I'll only say thank you a thousand times. As for you, Buggy, I'll pay you out for this.

ELEANOR : Couldn't we have a dance or a round game or something ?

MRS. L. : Good, what about postman's knock ?

STEPHENS : Bags I the postman.

PROSPER : Well, I have an idea. I was at the local school yesterday and the children were playing a new game. It had been discovered by the Superintendent in some old folk-lore records he was investigating. It originated in ancient Greece and

was a sort of fertility rite, a sacred dance to Demeter the Goddess of Plenty. I think I can remember it. All stand round in a circle; Ponsonby, call in the others and fill in the circle.

[PONSONBY *brings in the GARDENER and if convenient, a fat cook, a housemaid, etc.*]

Now if you are all ready I will explain. You'll easily pick it up as we go on. First, a Farmer must be chosen. I'd better be the first farmer. Then you all move round chanting the Greek chorus :

"The Farmer's in his den,
The Farmer's in his den,
Ee i ee i,
The Farmer's in his den" (*they all repeat*).

Good, now you go on like this :

"The Farmer wants a wife, etc. (*all repeat*).

The Farmer selects a wife. Come on Phœbe. Next you sing :

"The Wife wants a child" (*repeat as before*).

Come on Eleanor.

Next : "The child wants a dog" (*repeat*).

[ELEANOR *selects the BUTLER*].

PROSPER : Now we have the farmer, his wife, the child and her dog in the centre and we sing with action :

"We all pat the dog" (*repeat*.)

[*They all pat PONSONBY—all except SNOOPER and SMART, who register disapproval. In the general melee, STEPHENS pats SNOOPER good and hard.*]

SNOOPER : How dare you !

STEPHENS : Sorry, wrong dog.

PROSPER : Now it is Ponsonby's turn to be the farmer in his den and choose his wife.

SNOOPER : Stop. In the name of the State I protest against this ribaldry, particularly in the house of an official of the State. It is an outrage, this stupid game of farmers and dogs. You, Controller Joseph Prosper, will hear more about this contemptible waste of State time. You ought to be an example to others.

MRS. L. : Don't include the liqueur, brother. That was not wasted. What about another—is there any left, Ponsonby?

[PONSONBY *with alacrity serves all who are agreeable.*]

SMART : I join the Inspector in protesting against these proceedings—most reprehensible. How can the dignity of State officials be upheld if they descend to such vulgarity?

STEPHENS : These two dear lads ought to have been Nazi Storm Troopers 40 years ago.

SNOOPER (*proudly*) : My grandfather *was* a Nazi official and my father a respected member of the British Fascist Party. If Britain had joined with Germany 45 years ago there would have been no war, except against Bolshevism.

PROSPER : So ! Now I understand your attitude. Bred in the bone. You would revive the cruelties and brutalities of the German and Japanese nations. I thought we had done with all that.

SMART : It wasn't the German *people*. It was their rulers, my father always said. He was a trade union secretary. They passed a resolution at a Congress exonerating the German people.

PROSPER : My young friend, you cannot have a brutal army perpetrating thousands of the vilest atrocities unless there is a cruel and vicious people from which they have been recruited. An army truly represents the nation which creates it and its rulers.

SNOOPER : I refuse to listen any longer to such subversive clap-trap. I shall be here to-morrow morning to take your report. Come, Brother Smart, let us go. I suddenly feel very sick in the stomach. It must be that liqueur I drank. I thought it had a queer taste.

SMART : That's extraordinary. I also have a feeling of sickness and a nasty taste in my mouth. It *must* have been that liqueur. Ugh !

PROSPER : I am surprised that you, Inspector, and the Sub-Controller should, by implication, accuse the State Chemist of upsetting your stomachs. That is not supporting the State.

I shall consider it my duty to report you to the State Medical Board. I thought the liqueur was excellent, a most appetising product.

SNOOPER : You will not be the only one to send in a report, but mine will be to the Grand Security Council. Come, Smart, let us go. I am going to be violently sick in a moment.

SMART : I will come with you, brother. I feel I am going to join you. Ugh !

[Both exit hurriedly, groaning and holding their stomachs.]

STEPHENS : Nice young gentlemen, 1939 German vintage, rather corked. Ponsonby, you wasted good liquor on them.

BUTLER : Asking your pardon, sir, not altogether, sir. I slipped an ounce of nux vomica into each of their glasses. I had a phial in my pocket ready for any medical necessity, sir. I was a member of St. John Ambulance Brigade, sir—my war work after I had finished my labours at the War Office. I was the Brigade Dispenser. I am a great believer in nux vomica.

STEPHENS : Splendid, my old college chum, splendid !

[PONSONBY and MASHA collect cups, glasses, etc., and retire. STEFAN exit.]

Well, Pussy, those two birds have got it in for you. I expect they'll tip you the black spot to-morrow, old boy.

PROSPER : Quite likely. I've been expecting it for some time. The Nazi intolerance dies hard, but I've no doubt I shall survive. Snooper has been after me for some time.

ELEANOR : Not only Snooper.

PROSPER : Who else ?

ELEANOR : Smart.

PROSPER : Smart ?

ELEANOR : Yes, and I am partly the cause.

PROSPER : You ?

ELEANOR : Yes, and I am ashamed of myself.

PROSPER : Ashamed, Eleanor ? Why ?

ELEANOR : Because I've been foolish, allowing him to flirt with me and then, when he overstepped all decency, I slapped his face.

PROSPER : So that was the reason. Actually that is what I thought, but I knew I could trust you, Eleanor. You have too much good sense.

MRS. L. : Slapped his dirty face, good. I hope you slapped it hard.

STEPHENS : May I join in with my hearty approval? If any more slapping is required may I join in? Let us *all* pat the dog.

ELEANOR : It's getting late. I think I shall retire.

STEPHENS : I must be off—may I present my respects in the morning, ladies? I mean sisters?

MRS. L. : Do, brother. [*Exit STEPHENS.*]

PROSPER : Don't go just yet, Eleanor. Switch on the optional radio and see if there's anything worth listening to.

♦ [*ELEANOR does so.*]

MRS. L. : Let's hope it won't be jazz or swing. I'd rather take nux vomica.

[*All three sit on the settee, PROSPER in the centre. Soft music comes through loud speaker.*]

PROSPER : Well, my dears, things look like coming to a crisis. Snooper and Smart between them are determined on my dismissal.

ELEANOR : The beasts, I must have been mad not to see through Smart. I hate myself for falling so low as to grow fond of him. How you must loathe me, Joseph.

♦ PROSPER : Not at all, little Eleanor. It was only natural. You are both of an age. He can be very charming and attentive, and I left you much together. I am just as responsible as you.

ELEANOR : And out of revenge he plots—with Snooper—to get you dismissed, dismissed. Surely they won't try to punish you in any other way as well. I couldn't bear that.

PROSPER : Well, I suppose that's possible but I don't think so. The Council know I am very popular in this Section. They are growing more conscious of public opinion and public opinion is growing more powerful every day. Tyranny can always be defeated if the voice of the people is loud enough and forceful enough to make itself heard and felt. That is really the secret of all progress. The mass of the people will insist on the right thing being done, no matter what authority is over them. Unfortunately, the people are too often apathetic, and give tyrants a loose rein, but they are waking up from their long sleep and this incident of Snooper and Smart is only a beginning. If the Council did threaten to dismiss me, the people would become very much awake and probably resent such an attempt. Don't worry, dear.

ELEANOR : I'll try not to, but the suspense will be horrible.

MRS. L. : Surely the Council won't take the word of a swine like Snooper against yours, Joseph ?

PROSPER : I trust not. The President is a very old colleague of mine, but Snooper also has his friends on the Council. Don't let us worry any more about it but listen to the music.

MRS. L. : I seem to remember that tune, Joseph. (*Music gradually strengthens into "Just a Song at Twilight."*) Yes—one of the old, old tunes. I (*sobs*) remember in days now gone—alas !

[*She wipes her eyes and reaches for PROSPER's hand. ELEANOR snuggles up to him and closes her eyes. He puts his arm round her.*]

[SLOW CURTAIN.]

ACT III.

[It is about 10 a.m., June 2nd, 1980. PONSONBY the Butler is discovered in his shirt sleeves leaning over a chair down C. polishing a cigarette box placed on the chair. He is singing softly to himself, "Roll out the Barrel."]

[MASHA and STEFAN enter from the garden. MASHA whispers to STEFAN and they tiptoe down to the back of PONSONBY.]

MASHA and STEFAN : We all pat the dog, we all pat the dog, ee i, ee i, we all pat the dog. (*Which they do with vigour.*)

BUTLER (*stands erect and fends them off*) : You young blighters, I suppose you think that's funny. I fail to see where the bleeding humour comes in. Because you are both got up like circus performers you think you can do as you like in this house, *Sister* (*with scornful emphasis*) Masha and *Brother* Stefan. Kids like you scarcely been promoted out of your napkins and yet you throw your weight about like grown up men and women.

MASHA : Don't be cross, Ponsy, old dear. Give ickle baby a wee kiss and she won't be naughty any more. (*Holds up her face, which PONSONBY gallantly kisses on the cheek.*)

BUTLER : Well, I don't know. I don't feel 70 at this moment, not much more than—well 65 say. Go on with you, you young doxy, tampering with a poor old man's affections. However, I'm proof against your tricks, my girl. I never had but two vices. Suppression of the sale of drink killed one of them, and advancing age the other. Well, well—

STEFAN : Well, advancing age won't protect you if I ever catch you kissing Masha again.

MASHA : Now, Daddy Ponsy, give ickel baby brother Stefan a nice ickle kissie; he's jealous.

BUTLER : I'll be damned if I do.

STEFAN : And I'll be double damned if I let you, you old billy goat.

BUTLER : Nothing doing. I leave kissing games to Brother Smarty Smart, he's very clever at it.

STEFAN (*suspiciously*) : Who has he been kissing now ?

BUTLER : Well, I couldn't rightly say who he's kissing now. But he was having a basin full last night in the summer house.

STEFAN (*angrily*) : Who was it ? Tell me.

BUTLER : No names, no pack drill. All I can truthfully say is it was—

STEFAN : Well, who ?

BUTLER : Not me.

STEFAN (*getting angrier*) : Of course it wasn't you, you old snoot. Was it Mrs. Prosper or Mrs. Langdale ?

BUTLER : Oh, dear no. It never would be Mrs. Langdale, but I wouldn't put it past him to try the boss's wife.

STEFAN (*infuriated*) : Then there's only one other woman. Was it you, Masha ?

MASHA : Well, supposing it was, what about it ?

STEFAN : I won't stand it. I'll punch his beastly head, the swine.

MASHA (*repenting*) : Don't get so worked up, Stevie. It was nothing, just a little peck. I can't say I liked it.

STEFAN (*sobering down*) : Well, tell me if he tries it on again and I'll smack his silly face.

[*They whisper together.*]

BUTLER : What a fuss about nothing. Children, let not your angry passions rise, your little hands were never meant to tear each other's eyes. Come and tell daddy you've forgiven each other.

[*They come down and stand on either side of him.*]

MASHA : Kiss us better, Daddy. (PONSONBY *kisses her.*)

Now kiss ickle Stevie.

STEFAN : If he wants a thick ear let him try.

BROADCAST WARNING.

[All rush in and stand at the salute except ELEANOR. MRS. LANGDALE does not appear, so those present will be STEFAN, MASHA, and PONSONBY, already on the stage, to be joined by PROSPER, ELEANOR, SMART, GARDENER, and any other domestics available. Some of them carry implements of their calling and find difficulty in retaining hold of them whilst making the salute.]

[PONSONBY gets his coat half on only and raises one unsleeved arm.]

ANNOUNCER : " This is the State Radio Western Section and this is Announcer 2,561 speaking :

Foreign News—The death is announced of King Connor of Eire, who died yesterday at the Royal Palace on Achill Island. King Connor was the 23rd of the Royal line since 1950. He has ruled—I beg your pardon—reigned over Eire for five weeks. It is expected that the various warring armies now fighting each other in Southern Ireland will agree to an armistice in order to appoint a successor to King Connor. Public opinion in Eire appears to favour Patsy Flanagan, who is at present employed on the subway in New York.

Home News.—The Historical Research Department of this area has recently discovered some old records made by the British Broadcasting Company during 1935. We are now going to give you one of these records as an example of the deplorable conditions existing in those days amongst the working classes. In those far away times the masses of the people obviously thought more of their stomachs than the higher things of life. When the vast majority of our people to-day are vegetarians and are all teetotalers, this record will show what a great advance has now been made. Here is the record :

[Female announcer with a very superior, haughty and patronising voice.]

FEMALE ANNOUNCER : This is the B.B.C. We have here in the Studio this morning Mrs. Patrick Bumpus, of Lower Gornal, Staffordshire. You are to have the great privilege of her advice on how to prepare and cook the Sunday dinner for three persons—Mrs. Bumpus.

MRS. BUMPUS (with a strong Black Country accent) : Well, I don't know, friends, as I can tell you very much. My old man says to

me just before I started for the Studio this morning, "Blimey, missus, if this don't beat cock-fighting, you going on the kitchen front; do you think you can put it over?" Well, what I mean-ter say is, you've got to feed the old man, haven't you? Well, for my Sunday dinner I buys a seven pound joint of the best sirloin of beef, you see there's only me and the old man and my old mother. I puts this in a flat tin with plenty of suet and about three to four pounds of sliced pertaters. In another tin I puts the Yorkshire pudding mixture, which I make from flour and milk and six eggs, all well mixed together. Then the old man and mother carries the tins down to the bakehouse and by the time they've had one or two and I've laid the table, they bring the tins back with everything hot and sizzling."

FEMALE ANNOUNCER: Thank you, Mrs.—Mrs. Bumpus. We are now to have the pleasure of listening to Miss Mona Melisande, giving to-day's great thought, which will consist of a reading of poetry—Miss Melisande:

MISS MELISANDE (*reads in a monotonous wailing voice à la B.B.C. the following verses*):

[*During the reading the listeners become more and more doleful and sad and some sniff and furtively wipe their eyes.*]

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here.
 My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer;
 Chasing the wild deer, and following the roe,
 My heart's in the Highlands, wherever I go.
 Farewell to the Highlands, farewell to the North,
 The birthplace of valour, the country of worth.
 Wherever I wander, wherever I rove,
 The Hills of the Highlands for ever I love.

FEMALE ANNOUNCER: Thank you, Miss Melisande.

[END OF BROADCAST.]

[*All exit except PROSPER, ELEANOR, MASHA, SMART, STEFAN, and PONSONBY.*]

PROSPER (*to STEFAN*): Anything special for my attention this morning, Stefan?

STEFAN: Nothing very important, sir. There is a meeting of the Research Section of the Historical Committee to-morrow

evening at which you promised to give an address on Manners and Customs of the Pre-New Order Era.

PROSPER : Thanks, I was forgetting. Well, I shan't need many notes for that talk. The old world—the old world !

STEFAN : The old world was a terrible place to live in, I suppose, sir. You ought to know, you were born and brought up in it. I often wonder how you stood it. It's a wonder you survived it.

PROSPER : Not so terrible, Stefan. There were many compensations. There was love and laughter, friendship and courage ; there was also suffering, physical and mental. You young people have been born into an easier and pleasanter life and I sometimes think you fail to realise how much you owe to that old world whose people made this one for you. There were young and old people then who were just as impatient. They thought the Great War was fought solely to give them a better and easier existence. After the proclamation of peace they thought again. You can't destroy millions of lives, millions of food producing acres, animals, houses, stores, without causing wide-spread distress. It took 20 years to remedy all that. It also took great courage, self-denial and abundant sympathy.

STEFAN (*bored*) : Yes, sir—you had the special radiogram from the Grand Council, which I sent up to your bedroom by Ponsonby with your morning cup of tea ? It was in your own private code, sir, so I did not attempt to decipher it, sir.

PROSPER : Yes, thank you. I decoded it. It made most interesting reading. Mrs. Prosper and I are just off to deal with the instructions contained in that message from the President of the Grand Council. I do not expect we shall be long. When the Inspector-General arrives ask him to make himself comfortable until I return. (*To SMART.*) You will see after the Inspector, Smart. I don't think I should persuade him to sample any more State liquor. It had rather too much of an old world flavour for modern tastes, I'm afraid. Come, Eleanor. (*They exit.*)

BUTLER (*to SMART*) : I trust, sir, you have recovered from your sickness of last night. I'm afraid that State liqueur was too freshly mixed. I had a slight attack of the hiccoughs after I retired to my couch. I used to suffer a lot in my youth from hiccoughs, sir. Usually after a lodge meeting.

SMART : Beastly stuff, ugh ! These chemists are too fond of experimenting. Toadying to the mob. I don't know why they can't leave us to the State Beverage of good clear barley water and lemon. That's a sound healthy drink and cooling to the blood.

BUTLER : Excellent also for subduing carnal desires, sir, and invaluable as an aperient, sir. (*MASHA and STEFAN are busy about the room and whispering together.*) The State products do not suit everyone. You and the Inspector and to a lesser degree, myself, were the only persons incommoded last night. If I may venture to hazard a conjecture, sir, the others are probably completely well seasoned, internally. In my youthful days, the bad old days, when intoxicating beverages were freely consumed by the people, we alluded to such a condition, sir, as being well-pickled.

SMART : That's enough, Ponsonby, you may go. Brother Stefan and I have serious business to discuss. You also may go, Masha. (*Exit MASHA.*)

BUTLER : Very good, sir. (*Exit.*)

SMART (*to STEFAN*) : Now, Stefan, the Inspector and I have been into all the evidence of Prosper's neglect of his official duties, and we think we have a strong case to present to the Grand Council for his dismissal. If they should accept our advice, mind I say if, because he has friends on the Council, and we can't be absolutely certain, then I shall most probably be appointed in his place. I shall, of course, require a smart young Secretary and you will be a likely candidate for the post. I shall also be able to find a place here for Masha.

STEFAN (*sullenly*) : I don't know that I should be willing to act as your Secretary, and I certainly shouldn't allow Masha to stay here, whether I do or not.

SMART (*laughing*) : Oh, I thought you were sweet in that quarter, you gay young dog. I shouldn't have thought it of you. I'm not surprised though, she's a tasty little lass.

STEFAN (*angrily*) : Please speak with more respect, Brother Smart. Masha and I are engaged and I resent your attitude.

SMART : Oho, touchy, aren't you ? A wee bit jealous too, eh ? But you're not the only pebble on the beach. You ask Masha.

STEFAN (*rushing at him*) : You damned lying swine !

[SMART *holds him off as SNOOPER enters.*]

SNOOPER : Hallo, what's this, a wrestling match ?

STEFAN : No, Inspector. We were playing "The Farmer's in his den" and I was just about to pat the dog. (*Exit quickly.*)

SNOOPER : There's too much levity in this house. I am surprised at you, Assistant Controller.

SMART : I was not to blame, sir ; the young ruffian started on me. The poor lad is infatuated with Mrs. Prosper and gets jealous because I have first place in her affections, sir.

SNOOPER : So that's where the wind blows. What a Nazi Storm Trooper you would have made ! However, business before pleasure. You have made out your report about the Controller's neglect of duty ?

SMART : Yes, Sir.

SNOOPER : You have omitted nothing—of an incriminating character ?

SMART : I don't think I have, sir.

SNOOPER : You should be sure, Assistant Controller. You will never be recommended for Controller if you are not able to provide an absolutely impregnable case against Prosper. Have you mentioned in your report his participation in a plot for the overthrow of the State ? The discovery of a document signed by him ?

SMART : Oh, I don't think he's ever done anything as bad as that, sir.

SNOOPER : Assistant Controller Smart—if you know your duty to the State—such a document will be discovered.

SMART : Er—very good, sir.

SNOOPER : I must get through to headquarters before the Controller returns. I understand from Brother Ponsonby that he will not be long. (*Goes to desk for 'phone.*) No telephone here ?

SMART : No, sir, he will not allow a telephone in the house. There is a call-box in the garden, quite handy.

SNOOPER : Absurd, most unofficial. State officers may ring and ring and no reply. What does he say to that?

SMART : He says "let em' ring," sir.

SNOOPER : That's another nail in his coffin. Come.

[*Both exit.*]

[*Enter PONSONBY showing in STEPHENS with flowers.*]

BUTLER : If you will wait, sir, I will ascertain if Mrs. Langdale is receiving.

STEPHENS : Gad, Ponsonby, don't talk as if the lady was expecting stolen property!

BUTLER : I apologise, sir. Of course, I gather that the receiver is always understood to be worse than the thief.

STEPHENS : Upon my word, Ponsonby, you are losing your capacity for suavity and discretion. Now you are implying that I am a thief.

BUTLER : Oh no, sir, not at all. I may remark however, that, when I was a young man—

STEPHENS : In the War Office—

BUTLER : Prior, sir, to my entrance into the service of His Majesty King George, prior to that, sir, I was often accused of stealing a young woman's affections.

STEPHENS : The devil you were, and did they object?

BUTLER : Not as a rule, sir, but their husbands usually did. Oh, here (*enter MRS. LANGDALE*) is Madam, sir. (*Exit.*)

STEPHENS : Good morning, sister. May I lay these sweet flowers of Spring on your shrine, fair lady?

MRS. L. : Mercy me, have you been sitting up all night reading poetry?

STEPHENS : Such as—"I arise from dreams of thee in the first sweet sleep of night."

MRS. L. : If it affects you like that, I should take a couple of aspirins, or a dose of Ponsonby's nux vomica. But, seriously, I do thank you. In this year of 1980 it is refreshing to find someone who hasn't forgotten old time customs. In these days of equality of the sexes, the young men think the girls ought to pick their own flowers. When I was a girl—well, every day—

STEPHENS : They sent you violets and no wonder. Not only violets to match your eyes, but roses to suggest your cheeks and lilies, your fair hands.

MRS. L. : Mercy me ! If you can do this at your age what a lad you must have been—how many years ago ?

STEPHENS : Then you will accept my floral offering in memory of our exotic youth ?

MRS. L. : Of course I will ; it's very sweet of you—brother. Shall we go into the library for a chat ? That Inspector chap and Smarty Smart are here. They are telephoning at present, but will be back any moment. I don't suppose you want to join in their confidences. Masha ! Masha !

[*Enter MASHA.*]

Take these lovely flowers into my room, Masha. (*Exit Mrs. L. and STEPHENS.*)

[*MASHA pauses to smell and admire the flowers when SMART enters.*]

SMART : Hallo, lovely, are those flowers for me ?

[*She lays them on the table up R.*]

MASHA : Certainly not.

SMART : A love token from Little Boy Blue Stefan for his sweetie pie, Masha, eh ?

MASHA : Mind your own business, Brother Smart. (*Going towards garden.*)

SMART (*following her.*) : A pretty little girl like you, beautiful, is most decidedly my business.

[*She exits quickly, followed by SMART as STEFAN enters, but does not see MASHA, only SMART.*]

[*A scream is heard and MASHA's voice*] : You dirty swine.

[STEFAN, who has gone to desk, hurriedly opens drawer, takes out an Army revolver and rushes after them.]

[Another scream from MASHA, a shot is fired as PROSPER and ELEANOR enter, followed by SNOOPER, MRS. L., STEPHENS and PONSONBY.]

PROSPER : What's all this? Who fired that shot?

BUTLER : Allow me, sir, I will ascertain the cause of the disturbance.

[Exit PONSONBY to garden.]

ELEANOR : What's happened? I heard a woman scream as we came in. Masha, I think.

MRS. L. : Yes, both General Stephens and I heard it in the library.

ELEANOR : I trust it's nothing serious.

STEPHENS : Some other blighter is no doubt after your eggs, Pussy, and your valiant gardener chappie has been drilling him through and through with rabbit shot or at any rate trying to. Well, it wasn't me this time. Shall I go and have a look see?

PROSPER : No. I expect there will be a simple explanation. We will await Ponsonby's return. Perhaps Trupenny was shooting at the rabbits.

MRS. L. : Then I can understand Masha screaming. She has a very sympathetic nature and loves the little furry creatures. I love them too—with onion sauce.

STEPHENS : It didn't sound like a shot gun though.

ELEANOR : I do hope Ponsonby will be quick. This suspense is most distressing. Why aren't Brothers Stefan and Smart here?

STEPHENS : They are no doubt helping the gardener to catch that rabbit. Your estimable gardener thinks rabbits have wings; he fires in the air.

MRS. L. : They are very quiet out there. I hope Stefan hasn't shot Masha. They've been quarrelling a lot lately. Ponsonby told me Stefan is jealous of the attention Smart has been giving to Masha lately. Smart is a nasty bit of work.

ELEANOR : Don't I know it, Phœbe.

STEPHENS : Don't worry ladies, Ponsonby may be depended upon to do the correct thing whatever the emergency.

[*Re-enter PONSONBY. All are agog for his explanation.*]

PROSPER : Well, Ponsonby ?

BUTLER : Well, sir, in a manner of speaking it is *not* well.

MRS. L. : Come, come, Ponsonby, spill it.

BUTLER : Certainly, Madam. To put the matter succinctly and without preamble, I have to acquaint you with the undoubted fact that Brother Smart has been shot.

ELEANOR : Smart shot ! and you stand there in that calm detached manner doing nothing about it !

BUTLER : Indeed, madam, I have done all that was humanly possible. The wound was not serious, the forearm slightly grazed only. I have bound it up, placed him in a deck chair, and administered a restorative.

STEPHENS : Nux vomica, I presume.

BUTLER : Your presumption is correct, sir. As an addendum to my statement, Brother Prosper, I may say that I found this Army revolver—yours—by the side of the body.

MRS. L. : Don't be melodramatic, Ponsonby. There can only be a body if it is a dead one.

BUTLER : Asking your pardon, madam, bodies may be divided into two types, the quick and the dead. This body was decidedly quick when I left it in the deck chair and cursing most fluently.

ELEANOR : But who shot him and why ?

BUTLER : That I was unable to ascertain, Madam, as the assailant was not in the immediate vicinity during the time of my investigation.

SNOOPER : You were careful, of course, to handle the revolver so that no finger prints could be obliterated.

BUTLER : I beg your pardon, sir. I know my job as a butler. I very carefully removed all traces of dirt and dust on the pistol, otherwise it would not be fit to lay it on the master's polished desk. I spend an appreciable amount of my daily toil in polishing that desk, sir.

SNOOPER : Idiot. Anyhow it's quite clear the pistol belongs to the Controller, and your action in suppressing State evidence is a punishable offence, let me tell you, my man.

PROSPER (*laughing*) : Do you suspect me, Inspector, of firing that shot ?

SNOOPER : Why not ? You had just come back, there was ample time for you to have done it.

PROSPER : My dear Inspector, I am not a Nazi as I understand your grandfather was. Englishmen don't shoot unless there is a just cause to shoot.

SNOOPER : Oh, there was cause enough.

PROSPER : What do you mean ?

SNOOPER : An old husband, a young wife and an ardent lover provides the cause—jealousy.

PROSPER : What do you mean, man ?

SNOOPER : I should have thought my meaning was obvious. Brother Smart told me last night of his relations with your wife.

PROSPER (*springing at him and clutching his throat*) : You foul liar !

ELEANOR : It's untrue, you beast !

[STEPHENS goes to separate SNOOPER and PROSPER as Broadcast Alert sounds.]

[*All rest of cast rush in at the sound of alert.*]

[STEFAN and MASHA, embracing, come in last, followed by SMART, who is very pale and has a bandaged arm in a sling.]

BROADCAST.

ANNOUNCER : This is the State Broadcasting Bureau and this is Announcer 25,781 speaking. To-day, June 2nd, 1980, is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening of the first State Vegetarian Restaurant. To-day there are 500,000 in the Western Area alone.

The Director of State Airways asks me to issue a warning to the public. Many accidents are occurring owing to careless flying. The Airway traffic lines are considerably overcrowded at this season of the year, hampering the movements of State Transport planes and Security Police speed auto-jets. Before you

wheel your flier out of its shed on to the back lawn, ask yourself—
"Is this journey absolutely necessary?"

The Grand Council is seriously concerned with the leakage of official information, and steps are being taken to round up the culprits guilty of such subversive conduct. Anyone found guilty will be summarily liquidated. It is the duty of every citizen to assist the Security Police in arresting the criminals. Here is to-day's Great Thought, given by Miss Ermyntrude Mut :

[*Woman announcer with the mournful voice.*]

"How pleasant it is at the end of the day
No follies to have to repent,
But to reflect on the past and to feel that our time
All day has been *worthily* spent.

[END OF BROADCAST.]

PROSPER : Don't go, friends. There are matters to be discussed which should be of interest to you all. Our friend Inspector Snooper is anxious to address you. He has accused me of firing a pistol at Brother Smart and I should like the Inspector to substantiate his accusation in your presence, or to apologise.

SNOOPER : I am not interested in your domestic problems, Controller. I have much more important affairs to discuss—affairs of the State—but as regards the shooting, I will merely say that the Controller was in the garden when the shot was fired, and it was from his pistol.

STEFAN : Yes, it was the Controller's pistol, and I fired it, so there. Brother Smart was insulting Masha and I lost my temper and saw red. I didn't mean to hurt him. I'm sorry.

PROSPER (*to* STEFAN) : Well, well, my boy, be thankful you didn't kill Brother Smart. I shall have to deal with your offence later. I'm pained that such a thing should have happened in my house. How often have I told you that anger with and injury to another is an injury to yourself? You cannot hurt another fellow-creature without hurting yourself, Stefan. You may have had great provocation from Brother Smart. I too, have had, but I haven't used violence to him, sorely as I have been tempted.

ELEANOR : Yes, that is true, and he would have deserved it if you had.

PROSPER : Please, Eleanor. We have been trying to establish a world without war—let us at least have peace between ourselves. Stefan, I shall talk to you later.

SNOOPER : Please, suspend these trivial domestic details. As all the members of your establishment are present, Controller, it will be a fitting occasion for me to state the purpose of my mission here. The Grand Council have been very concerned with the laxity of State procedure under Controller Prosper's command. Moreover, they have reason to suspect that he has been guilty of a subversive action against the State. A document has been discovered bearing his signature which clearly proves his complicity in a plot to overthrow the State. I have it here.

PROSPER : May I glance at it ?

[SNOOPER holds it warily, so that PROSPER could not snatch it, if he attempted to.]

PROSPER : A very crude forgery. I suppose this is your work, Smart. You always did spell correspondence with an a instead of e.

SMART (*weakly*) : He forced me to do it.

STEPHENS : Same old document, same old forgery. The Huns were very much cleverer at it. This is a very crude attempt.

SNOOPER : If the State says it is no forgery, and I as the State representative say it is genuine, then obviously it is genuine. The State doesn't lie.

STEPHENS : Same old injured innocence. Wouldn't old Hitler have loved this lad ? Hitler was a champion liar himself.

SNOOPER : I have recently been in communication with the Grand Council's Secretary and I have his full authority to dismiss Controller Prosper from his office and to appoint Brother Smart in his place.

ELEANOR : You ! You dismiss my husband ! You are not fit to lace his shoes. This is all a plot hatched by you and your fellow criminal Smart. Brother Smart of the New Order, whose greatest ambition is to cause trouble between husband and wife, to tell filthy lies and try to oust him from his position of State. Out of spite because I refused your advances. I don't care who hears me, you turn on both of us, you unmitigated skunk.

PROSPER : Be quiet, Eleanor. I will deal with all this. Don't distress yourself, dear. These two gentlemen—I forget, not gentlemen—brothers—cannot harm your reputation or my official position.

SNOOPER : We shall see, Brother Prosper.

PROSPER : I think we shall, brother. May I ask at what time your wireless talk with the Secretary took place?

SNOOPER : What does it matter? Anyhow it was just before you came in.

PROSPER : That would be about 10-30.

SNOOPER : Yes.

PROSPER : Well, at the moment, you had ceased to be an officer of the State for exactly two hours.

SNOOPER : What do you mean?

PROSPER : I mean that at 8-30 a.m. I had a secret code wireless from the *President*, instructing me to detain you and to communicate with the local Superintendent of the Security Police. I had just returned from him when Smart was shot in the garden.

SNOOPER : Preposterous. You are simply bluffing to gain time.

PROSPER : Am I? Read this. You know the secret code. I have decoded it letter for letter. Is that the President's signature?

[*Hands it to him.*]

SNOOPER (*crumpled*) : I suppose it is. Well, what are you going to do?

PROSPER : For the benefit of all my people assembled here, I am going to read the message from the President. (*Reads*) :

"Detain Inspector Snooper stop.
Contact Superintendent Security Police stop.
Conclusive evidence of sale of State secrets to an alien power
by Snooper stop."

[*Consternation.*]

SNOOPER (*bluffing*): Well, what are you going to do now? You can't frighten me.

PROSPER: I haven't read all the message; The President adds:

"In consequence of the Inspector's record and the zealous discharge of his duties for the State, you are empowered to offer him an alternative to arrest and liquidation."

[*Goes across to desk and picks up pistol.*]

That alternative I now offer you, Brother Snooper. (*Breaks weapon.*) I see there is a shell left in it. (*Hands him the revolver.*)

SNOOPER: This is a conspiracy. I am not guilty. I have always served the State to the best of my ability.

STEPHENS: Which State, I wonder?

SNOOPER: My enemies, jealous of my position, have brought this about. A man cannot rise to my position in the State, an Inspector-General, higher in rank than a mere Controller, without arousing envy in others less efficient than himself. I was a Controller when I was only 20 years of age. By my zeal, energy, and attention to duty, promotion was rapid and I know I merited it. It isn't the first time that a man has been plotted against by his inferiors. Lies and false evidence have evidently been at work and now as a reward for my services, I am told I am permitted to end my life, a life of self-devotion to the State. Well, I shan't be the only martyr to end a self-sacrificing life through treachery. I shall die without dishonour. Give me the weapon. I know what the State Military Prison is like. I was Governor of one once. I ran it on a German model. It was very efficiently conducted. (*To PROSPER.*) There was none of your sloppy sentimentality about my control. Prisoners did not live very long, though, to benefit by my system. They were criminals and it was necessary to tame them. (*Almost with a shriek.*) But I, I, could not endure such a prison—I am not a criminal. I am a high State Official. I am a victim of a cruel vindictive persecution. I go to my doom a martyr, to a death without dishonour. I die for the State. (*Salutes and quick exit into garden.*)

[*Pause—then shouts, blowing of whistles and a shot—ELEANOR covers her face and weeps.*]

STEPHENS : He was a swine, but hang it all, he died game.

MRS. L. : Poor misguided fellow. After all I'm sorry.

[PONSONBY is going into the garden.]

PROSPER (*stopping* PONSONBY) : Don't trouble, Ponsonby, the Security Police are there, they will attend to everything.

[Long pause—then more shouts and whistles.]

MRS. L. : It's terribly tragic, but I hope he didn't do it on my geranium border (*hysterical*).

[Enter Security Police with SNOOPER in handcuffs—his clothes are torn, his face scratched and his cap is missing.]

MRS. L. : Well, I don't know ! Is he seriously wounded, I wonder ?

SNOOPER : No. I fired but my hand trembled with emotion and I missed the target. I am not hurt.

STEPHENS (*disgusted*) : And I called him a brave man, pah !

MRS. L. : And I wasted sympathy on him.

PROSPER : Well, the Grand Council will have to deal with him after all.

SNOOPER (*truculently*) : You think you have worsted me but I'm not dead yet. I have friends in high places, powerful friends, I tell you. I will have my revenge.

PROSPER : Even in our new world I've no doubt you have your fitting associates.

SNOOPER : Your new world. A nice mess you made of the old one, you and your generation. Starting a bloody war against Germany, a State with a far higher culture than your own. And then your frenzy of hatred against your enemy when through treachery you had temporarily overthrown him. Bitter vicious hate.

PROSPER (*calmly*) : My friend, there was little if any hate on our side, in spite of terrible provocation. The operating surgeon doesn't hate his patient when he has to remove a malignant

growth. We don't hate a mad dog when we shoot it. Seventy-five per cent. of the German nation had malignant growths on the brain, but we only shot a small proportion of them and that in self-defence. Those great leaders and inspirers, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin and Chiang-Kai-Shek (*indicating portraits*) were not haters, they were Saviours—they saved the world for freedom and strove to bring about a new order in which there should be no more war. That was not hatred. That was love, and love is stronger than hate. Hate destroys, love creates. Love conquers in the end.

SNOOPER (*with an evil sneer*) : Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin and Chiang-Kai-Shek—they are all dead I tell you—dead.

PROSPER (*with calm dignity*) : No, my friend, not dead, their work endureth for ever. No, physically dead perhaps, but their spirit abideth. I don't suppose your little two by four brain will understand that.

SNOOPER : I understand that *they* are dead and I am living and intend to go on living. My sort is not so easily killed.

PROSPER (*calmly*) : Yes, I know that also, but you and your sort *are* dying, nevertheless.

[*During the rest of this oration of PROSPER's the stage gradually darkens. At a point to be indicated later, the only people visible on the stage will be PROSPER, who will come down front centre, and SNOOPER at the back between his armed guards. Later SNOOPER's face, leering with a malicious grin, fades altogether. PROSPER's figure will also fade out, but his face will be visible until the Curtain.*]

The forces of evil are still powerful but they are slowly but surely being defeated. They had gathered their millions together forty years ago and the world reeled under their blows. Their victories were not won by the savage will of one tyrant alone, but by the fanatical and willing co-operation of millions of their soldiers and officers, bred for war only, who ruthlessly planned and executed one by one their acts of aggression. The civil population of the aggressor nations supported and condoned the unspeakable atrocities perpetrated by the military, for an invading army is truly a cross-section of the people. You said, my friend, that these great leaders are dead (*pointing to pictures*),

but during their earthly existence they were our inspirers and comforters and their example and influence are still with us. They made no specious promises of easy victory. They simply told us they had nothing to give us, save toil and sweat, blood and tears. Great were the sacrifices we were asked to make, and there was much toil and blood and many, many tears. But, throughout the history of man, sacrifice has been man's supremest achievement and all the world's greatest saviours and leaders have made it and have demanded it of their followers. The world to-day is a better place because of such sacrifices and the evil still with us is less deadly. We who are living should remember the many who died that we might live. A great man, Abraham Lincoln, said we should be highly resolved that our dead shall not have died in vain, and that Government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the earth. It is for us, the living, to be dedicated to the unfinished work for which they fought.

[The light begins to fade here and PROSPER moves down to the front. He does not ostensibly address the audience, but is speaking to a much larger audience outside the theatre. Gradually everything is faded out except SNOOPER's face at the back, and PROSPER's head and shoulders.]

But the fight is not only to be waged against the aggressor outside our land. We have to fight against the evil in our midst, in ourselves—ignorance and that selfishness which ignorance begets out of stupidity. These outposts of Evil, Evil's fifth column, defeatist, subversive, intolerant, treacherous as they always are, can out-flank the efforts of the bravest army of deliverance and make its sacrifices useless. Shall we thus break faith with the immortal dead, who died to make us free?

[Here very softly at first is heard the music of the Battle Hymn of the American Republic. It gains in volume and swells out into a mighty climax as PROSPER's speech ends.]

A few of us still living fought in the last great fight for the freedom of mankind; there was no bitterness nor hatred in our hearts against our enemies. We had faith in our mission and confidence in our leaders. Some of us felt we were dedicated to service for humanity. We had conquered our selfishness, perhaps we were unconsciously, with God's help, conquering the ignorance and selfishness of mankind.

[Speaking with great yet quiet fervour quotes] :

I have seen them in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps ;

They have builded Him an altar in the evening dew and damps ;

I have read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps,

His Day is marching on.

[SNOOPER's face is blacked out here. A light shines on PROSPER's rapt face, his head is raised heavenward and his arms are outstretched.]

[A soft female voice, without straining after effect, sings] :

In the beauty of the lilies, Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me ;
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free
While God is marching on.

[The music swells out to] :

Glory, Glory, Halleluia
The Day is marching on.

[as Curtain descends slowly.]

[During the black out, perhaps a cope covered with a black cloth could be draped over PROSPER's shoulders. By removing the black cloth a second before the limes are strengthened on PROSPER, he would stand in a shimmering glory, with outstretched hands as] :

THE CURTAIN FALLS.



